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VALLEY VOICE

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Tulare County Animal Control on Avenue 256

Tulare County Sued by Former Animal Control Employees

Catherine Doe

On November 10, two former Tulare County Animal Control employees, retired USMC Major Paul Grenseman and Julia Jimenez, filed suit in Tulare County Superior Court against five Tulare County employees, including Tim Lutz, Health and Human Resource Services fiscal operations manager. The plaintiffs are suing the county for discrimination, racial/ethnic and sexual harassment, failure to prevent discrimination and failure to prevent harassment as well retaliation for objecting to, speaking out against, and complaining of illegal discrimination and harassment.

Tulare County has 30 days from the time of being served to respond to the suit. The county was served the week of November 17.

On December 4, 2013, both Grenseman and Jimenez were "walked off the job" and told that they were under investigation and being put on administrative leave. Jimenez was subsequently fired on July 2, and Grenseman retired June 5-- two hours before he would have been fired. During their time on administrative leave, the county paid Grenseman and Jimenez approximately $60,000 combined to sit at home.

Jimenez' and Grenseman's case against the county starts a few months after Jimenez was hired to revamp Tulare County Animal Control's image.

In 2013, Animal Control took in 9,000 animals but only adopted out 700, which is well below a 10% survival rate. Within California, Tulare

LAWSUIT continued on **7 »**

Homeowners Bordering Stillwell Mine Want Compensation

Catherine Doe

When Rob and Sissi Morton moved into their Lemon Cove home 12 years ago, they thought they had bought a little piece of heaven. Their 1.5 acres of land had a beautiful view of the foothills and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Regardless of the amount of rainfall, they also had some of the most reliable water in the state, with the water table only five feet down.

That all changed when CEMEX came to town. In September 2002, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved a mining permit for CEMEX to lease 496 acres of Donald and David Stillwell's property. The name stuck and the mine became the Stillwell Quarry. A 137-acre portion in the middle of the parcel was to be mined for gravel. A condition of CEMEX' permit was to construct a recharge trench and continually keep it full of water. This trench was to counteract the effects of CEMEX' digging into the aquifer for gravel and disrupting the water flow to residents' wells. The Morton's, Rodriguez', Clouds' and Josh Packard's homes border the Stillwell Quarry.

In September of 2013, CEMEX stopped filling the recharge trench and by December of last year, the four residents' wells went dry or nearly dry. Repeated requests by the four residents to the BOS to force CEMEX to refill the trench only resulted in several contradicting studies and finger pointing, but no water.

After months of bad publicity, during which the company engaged in a losing battle to blame the drought, CEMEX abruptly and unexpectedly started filling the recharge trench. After three months of trying to refill the trench, only two houses of the four have water, the Mortons' and the Rodriguez'. Josh Packard and Orville and Mary Cloud still do not have enough water to run a load of dishes or take a shower. When CEMEX decides to leave Tulare County and the recharge trench goes permanently dry, the four homes

STILLWELL continued on **9 »**

Nunes Appointed Intelligence Chair

Staff Reports

On November 17, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) announced that Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA-22) will chair the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in the 114th Congress:

Rep. Devin Nunes

"Today we face a sophisticated and determined terrorist enemy that is intent on killing more and more Americans, not to mention innocents around the globe. We also face rogue states like Iran and North Korea that continue to thumb their noses at the United States. The world is becoming increasingly dangerous and the Intelligence Committee is vital to our efforts to protect the American people. Over the past four years, Devin has been instrumental in ensuring that our intelligence professionals have the resources they need to keep America safe. He has asked tough questions and conducted serious oversight to hold the Obama administration accountable. I look forward to working with him as the next chairman of the Intelligence Committee."

Said Congressman Nunes, "At a time when the United States faces major international challenges including significant terror threats, I am honored and humbled to have been entrusted with this position. I'd like to thank Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Ruppersberger for their exceptional bipartisan leadership of the Intelligence Committee. The committee's work is vital because strong congressional oversight of the intelligence community is critical for our national defense posture."

The new Plaza Drive development includes 23 townhomes.

Visalia Planning Commission Approves 25-Acre Multi-Use Business Park

Steve Pastis

At its November 10 meeting, the City of Visalia Planning Commission approved a 25-acre master-planned, multi-use business park development on the southwest corner of North Plaza Drive and West Crowley Avenue, just north of Highway 198 in Business Research Park.

The project, planned by 4Creeks, Inc., will offer 97,200 square feet of office space, 38,200 square feet of retail, a gas station and convenience store, a three-story 65-room hotel with conference room space, 11,250 of restaurant space, 28 executive lofts and 23 townhomes.

The architecture, designed by EBM Design Group, is described as modern English style.

"There will be brick facades, with stone also," said David Duda, project planner with 4Creeks. "We wanted to grab the elements of downtown (Visalia) with the use of brick."

The development has "green building" components, with two types of pedestrian paths – a circular path around the park and internal pathways – as well as solar canopies above some of the parking. The development will also provide bicycle facilities; preferential parking for van pools, car pools and low emission vehicles; and an on-site bioswale storm water management system. The project will incorporate selected plant materials and building features to reduce water consumption by 50%.

"That's one of the pushes on projects at the business park," said Paul Bernal, City of Visalia senior planner. "They emphasize green in both building construction and site design."

The townhomes in the project "will provide a buffer for existing residential homes, and provide residential units in close proximity to the highway," said Bernal, explaining that the motivation for including residences in the project was mainly to accommodate those who take Highway 99 to work in either Fresno or Bakersfield. The opportunity to both live and work at the business park was "part of the thinking too," he added. "If you want to live close to where you work, they will be happy to sell you a home."

The project will be developed in several phases. Groundbreaking on the first phase, a gas station and convenience store, could begin as early as the middle of next year.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Not Something the Landlords Can Deny Us

After more than 15-and-a-half years here in Lemon Cove, we have begun the difficult process of relocating--and the difficulty, chiefly, arises because we have absolutely no idea what is available locally to move in to, either to lease or purchase. We are searching, thus far fruitlessly--which is something of an irony, as this ancient house stands, neighbor-less, in 96 acres of citrus. The grove has been a marvelous playground for our children. But forget the fact that we have raised five kids here, that this is the only home our youngest has ever known, or that all five of them are saddened by our imminent dismissal: It's not so much that it is hard to detach ourselves from the house as it is that, at this juncture, we have no clear picture of where we're going. It is an uncertainty with which no one in the family feels quite yet comfortable.

Of course, it could always be worse--it could, say, be family who are jettisoning us from the premises: Imagine that!

And though the landlords seemingly blame us for everything, I will not write a negative word about this house; it's best, I think, for them to undergo their own process of discovery before posting it on Airbnb. Or whatever it is they intend to do with the house. They haven't told us because they refuse to speak with us--other than to say, "Out!"

Still, we all honestly look upon the old family home with affection. We'll miss the open space here, and our privacy within it. Most of all, I suspect, we'll miss the intoxicating springtime aroma of blossoming citrus--truly, a nepenthe.

Lest we actually do forget, how about we refresh ourselves with the notion of "clean and quiet" country living? Although we love the house--and it is in the "country"--the property itself is to "clean and quiet" as a slurry of coal ash is to cool. The water out here is so hard that it has to be treated to prevent our appliances from salting over. And the drinking water has to be filtered for nitrates.

Because 96 acres of citrus requires some tending to, beginning with fertilizer--commonly in the form of manure, and emanating an aroma antithetical to that of springtime. Mercifully, it does not linger. So the smell is a minor inconvenience, at least as compared with the biblical plague of flies said manure itself attracts. Screens are insufficient to defend against this pestilence, as they were against the bees the landlords used to keep on the property. I write "used to" because they stopped; not for our sake, certainly, but because they at last realized that any fees collected from the bee keeper did not warrant the risk that their seedless tangerines might eventually become, well, seedy.

Then there is the spraying of the trees several times per year, each operation lasting roughly four days--and one cycle of which is always conducted at night. Yes--all night, for four nights. This is accomplished by tractor, towing a loud blower, and they trundle along the rows between the trees throwing off a noxious white cloud of--something. Pesticides, I suppose, and sometimes an agent to protect the leaves against frost. I only know what it's like to live with this menace: The smell is appalling, the house must be battened down tight, and afterwards there is a chalky dust everywhere not easily washed away.

But the most terrifying thing is the mechanized trimming of the trees by the vehicle used, with its rotating arms and whizzing saws. I have encountered this monster countless times on my run and, because it's not so loud as the blower--and I tend, anyhow, to wear headphones--it has always come as a ghastly surprise. Think something like a crocodile attack, and you won't be too far off the mark.

At least we are warned when it has come time for the fruit to be picked. Early of a morning, customarily, we are overrun by hundreds of workers, all full-throated in song--in Spanish--shuttling between tree and bin while forklifts heft full bins onto waiting trucks. This can go on for days, and the only complaint I have is that--while walking on the long driveway--the workers, in the swinging of their ladders, often are heedless of traffic. As are the forklift operators, who are wont to speed about backwards.

Despite this and much more, actually, we all truly prefer to remain here. Our kids grew up here, and were always comfortable having friends--often in groups--home for extended visits. There were many times when, coming downstairs in the morning, I would not know who I would find. They still return, some of them, and of course our kids--when they can--come home for the Holidays or other significant family events. Sometimes with significant others. And this house, happily, holds all of them, as it always has done. According to the old saying, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." Except it's not. This house has been positively vibrant with our kids inside it, and I wonder what it will suffer after our eviction. What I do know is that we'll take that green grass with us wherever we go. It is not something the landlords can deny us.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

The Bob Mathias Story

It was a week before the November 4 election and I had just put away my work and curled up in bed with the Styles section of the New York Times. Right as I turn the pages back to my favorite column "Modern Love," I get a text.

"Certain Rudy is going to win?" asked Cole Azare, Devon Mathis' campaign manager.

I put down my paper huffing, "Of course Rudy (Mendoza) is going to win."

"Samplings of people on the ground has shown that this race is very much up in the air," said Mr. Azare.

"Wanna bet?" I asked.

"I'll make a gentleman's wager," he said.

Mr. Azare bet that Mr. Mathis would win by five points, max, and I bet that Mr. Mendoza would win by 15 points, at the least. Technically, we were both wrong, but Mr. Mathis' victory put a serious dent in my imagined prognostic abilities.

There are a lot of excuses why Mr. Mendoza lost.

One reason that voters got Devon and Devin confused, and wondered why our congressman was on the ballot twice. So they just voted twice for Devin Nunes, or so they thought. Or perhaps voters got Mr. Mathis confused with the late Olympian and Congressman, Bob Mathias--and thought they were voting for Mr. Mathias' resurrection.

What cannot be argued is that had this not been a "top two" primary, we would have been saying Assembly Member-elect Mendoza instead of the other way around. Mr. Mendoza would have easily beaten the unknown Mr. Mathis in the June primary and then beat out any Democrat on the ballot for the general election in November.

That means the Democrats, who don't vote much in primaries, came out in support for Mr. Mathis in the general election. No wonder everyone was wrong. Who can predict what the Democrats are going to do or if they are even going to vote?

Maybe it's just that Mr. Mathis had a better ground game and was more accessible to the press? But that makes too much sense. I'm going with the Bob Mathias angle.

How's that Districty Thing Work'n for Ya?

Last December, four Latino residents filed a California Voting Rights Act lawsuit against Visalia claiming that the "at-large" voting system makes it all but impossible for Hispanic candidates to be elected to the city council. Visalia City Council reluctantly voted to switch to district elections, the first of which will be in November 2016.

The residents who filed the lawsuit hailed the agreement as a victory for civil rights."We want Hispanics represented on the council -- that's sorely missing," said Louis Montion, a plaintiff and former Visalia Unified School Board member.

The City of Tulare was facing the same lawsuit and changed to district elections two years ago. So how's that working for them?

In the November 4 election, three people ran for Tulare City Council District 2, a white guy and two Hispanics. Mr. White Guy won.

In a heavily Hispanic neighborhood that has 10,000 residents, only 740 people voted. Low voter turnout is blamed for Mr. White Guy's winning. If low voter turnout is the problem, which everyone knows it is, how are by-district elections supposed to fix that?

Commenting on the 740 people who voted in Tulare City Council District 2, Louis Campos said in the *Visalia Times-Delta*, "less than 10% are deciding on who will represent them." Carlton Jones, Vice Mayor of Tulare said that, "It was as if going to by-district system was a moot point."

But it was not a moot point.

Ironically, if Tulare residents had voted at large, chances are, the city council would be seeing two fresh new Hispanic faces on the dais. Both candidates lost by very small margins, margins that could have easily been overcome in an at-large election.

If Visalia's future by-district elections produce the same results, it might be a very, very long time before we see another Hispanic on Visalia's City Council.

Now that the Elections are Behind Us….

What's the best thing to do now that the 2014 midterm elections are over? Talk about the 2016 elections. Candidate fatigue from the constant drone in the media about possible candidates for future elections is a news junky's fate, and I don't want the *Valley Voice* to disappoint.

Presidential Election 2016

Everyone has heard of the campaign for the undecided voter? Well, 2016 is the campaign for the undecided candidate. Some no-names have officially declared, but the front-runners for president on both sides of the aisle refuse to.

As the anticipation and excitement grows over Hilary Clinton's running, being coy about declaring could backfire. Jeb Bush made a very poignant observation a few weeks ago when discussing the possibility of his running. He said that there is more interest and enthusiasm generated while he was in the decision-making process than there will be once and if he enters the race.

Right now Mrs. Clinton's popularity is through the roof. But once she actually declares, all that excitement might dissipate along with her popularity. It's that same feeling a child might have looking under the Christmas tree on December 26. She needs to declare before it just turns into one big letdown.

Most predict it will be Mrs. Clinton against Mr. Bush. Both candidates would be an improvement on their familial predecessors: Mrs. Clinton would have all the qualities, and hopefully successes, of her husband without being distracted by chasing skirts; Mr. Bush would not make the same mistakes as his brother, because he is the "reader" in the family and doesn't have anything to prove to his father.

Compared to the other assorted nuts and fruits that might get the Republican nomination, Mr. Bush will be a pretty dull candidate to cover. But on the Democratic side of the ticket, I'm fine with Mrs. Clinton. She'll step in it plenty of times, and watching her back peddle gaffes a la Michael Jackson's moon walk will be phenomenal in itself to watch.

2016 California Election

More important to those of us living in California is what United States Senator Barbara Boxer will do.

A recent USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll found that a majority of Californians surveyed are ready for both states' senators to retire. Both Sen. Boxer and Sen. Feinstein were elected in 1992 and would be running for their fifth term. It is rumored that Sen. Boxer will not run for reelection in 2016 since the Republicans now have control of the Senate. Sen. Diane Feinstein may also not run for reelection but her term is not up until 2018.

These new revelations must make Attorney General Kamala Harris and Lt. Governor Gavin Newsome almost drool. So as to not split the youngish, northern, liberal vote, these two popular Democrats will obviously be deciding behind closed doors who will run for Governor and who will run for Senate.

Both were so confident of their reelection November 4 that they started laying the groundwork for future elections, literally ignoring their weak Republican challengers. Ron Nehring, Republican candidate for Lt. Governor, said that "Gavin Newsom treats this office like it is a taxpayer-funded gubernatorial exploratory committee for 2018 and everybody knows that."

They are an evenly matched political couple and have to make a backroom deal or they might find themselves without a job. They have well over $2 million each to spend on their next campaign and both received about 56% of the vote in this election. According to the Los Angeles Times, "their standings among Democrats, independents, minority voters, urban residents, men and women, young and old were remarkably similar." If both of them ran against another popular candidate from the south such as Antonio Villaraigosa, they would split the northern vote and Mr. Villaraigosa might win.

Should they collude? No. But it's naïve to think with all this political booty Ms. Harris and Mr. Gavin would risk it all in a tete-a-tete.

Election 2018

Unlike Mrs. Clinton, Connie Conway has announced her intention to run for election. After terming out of the Assembly in 2016 she plans on getting married and preparing for a run for the 18th District State Senate seat. Right now, that office is occupied by fellow Republican Jean Fuller, who will term out in 2018.

Another likely candidate is Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin. According to Tim Clark, Ms. Swearengin's political consultant, "The one sure bet is that Ashley Swearengin will be on the statewide ballot in 2018." Her choice of office will be Governor, Lt. Governor, and state Insurance Commissioner, unless she wants to run against an incumbent. Ms. Swearengin is interested in a management position, not a legislative one, so will not be seeking Sen. Boxer's seat if she decided not to run.

Ms. Swearengin's job as Fresno's mayor ends January 2016.

The 2020 Election

Congressman Devin Nunes has never won an election with less than 61% of the vote since he first ran in 2002. But those impressive results have mostly come while running against a Democrat. Now that California has its "top two" primary, how would Rep. Nunes do against another Republican?

Rep. Nunes' first victory in 2002 was for two reasons. First, his competitors were from Fresno County and split that county's vote, while Rep. Nunes cleaned up in Tulare County. But just as important was the fact that this unknown 30-year old dairy farmer had a winning ground game.

Sound familiar? Another young, ambitious, political neophyte can attribute his election victory to a successful ground game, Devon Mathis. Depending on when, and if, Mr. Mathis hits a couple of political home runs as the new Assembly member, he may be the first one to pose a serious threat to the to the seemingly unbeatable Congressman Nunes.

Congress needs to run every two years, so the Devon Mathis challenge may come in two, four or six years. Some advice for Rep. Nunes ? Don't hire former Congressman Eric Cantor's political pollster who had Mr. Cantor up by 20 points. And don't read political columns. 2020 is a long way away.

And Finally….

Obama is on track to give millions of Illegal immigrants amnesty for the remainder of his term. Those immigrants receiving amnesty will be the parents of American children so that families will not be torn apart through deportation. Immigrants harvest our crops, take care of our kids, and clean our toilets. And what do they get in return? $7.50 an hour? That's not enough to support a car let alone a child. If those Republicans howling over amnesty don't want them here, then they should quit using illegals to do jobs American citizens won't do.

The uproar by Fox News and other conservatives over this temporary amnesty runs in direct conflict to core Republican values and Christian principles. Giving sanctuary is in the Bible and a basic tenet of Christianity. If Republicans can embrace the Creationist idea that the world is only 6,000 years old, then certainly they can embrace sanctuary. The Republican Platform supports the traditional family of a mother, father and children staying together. Neither God, nor the Republican Platform, says anything about the family's color or citizenship.

Amnesty is a Republican value. Ronald Reagan knew it in 1986, and it's time for Fox News to get it also.

If a hard working mother or father can go to bed tonight knowing that they won't be torn away from their children, then all Republicans should sleep easier.

Visalia's Air Service in a Holding Pattern

Steve Pastis

Although the Visalia City Council voted at its September 15 meeting to recommend to the Department of Transportation (DOT) that the Essential Air Service (EAS) contract for Visalia Airport be awarded to SeaPort Airlines, Great Lakes Airlines, which failed in its bid to have its contract renewed, will continue to provide service to Visalia at least through the end of February.

EAS is a federal program that guarantees a certain level of scheduled air service to communities that would otherwise have lost access to the nation's air transportation system in a deregulated airline industry. Great Lakes was among the five airlines that submitted bids to provide EAS service to Visalia Airport.

"Visalia was not well-served by Great Lakes," said Vice Mayor Warren Gubler at the September 15 meeting, a comment that summed up the city council's dissatisfaction with the airline.

When the city council approved the recommendation of Portland-based SeaPort Airlines, it was estimated that SeaPort would replace Great Lakes and begin local flights in December or January.

The DOT issued an "Order Temporarily Extending Current Subsidy," which extended the September 10, 2012 order selecting Great Lakes to provide service to Visalia and Merced "from October 1, 2014 until further departmental action, but no later than February 28, 2015."

The order could be extended again if necessary, however.

"Unfortunately, none of the dates are set in stone," said Visalia Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez, who isn't concerned about waiting for the Department of Transportation decision. "It's a normal process. They have so many cities (with air service) switching hands."

Complicating the issue for the DOT is the possibility that Merced, linked with Visalia in the current contract, may not continue to be part of the EAS program. Merced already had its eligibility terminated because its airport failed to meet the EAS requirement of averaging 10 passengers a day. The city is currently in the waiver process to challenge the Department of Transportation's ruling.

Great Lakes will continue to fly to Los Angeles until further notice.

When all is said and done, Cifuentez expects the DOT to award the contract to serve Visalia Airport to SeaPort Airlines because the department places importance on "weighted input from the community." Any decision to ignore the Visalia City Council's decision to recommend SeaPort would be "outside the norm," according to Cifuentez.

"I haven't seen that happen in years," he said, noting that it was more common several years ago, when the DOT policy was to simply award contracts to the company that submitted the lowest bid.

So until the DOT issues its next order, despite any local grumbling, Great Lakes will continue to provide 12 weekly nonstop round-trip flights to Los Angeles International Airport, at an annual EAS subsidy of $2,145,917.

"At this point, it's just a waiting game," said Cifuentez.

California Water Launches Conservation Contest

Staff Reports

California Water is inviting teachers of grades 4-6 to create and implement a class project related to water and enter to win a prize, including an all-expense paid trip to the Channel Islands for the winning class.

California Water is collaborating with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) on the in-class and at-home interactive experiences for students, parents and teachers. Thanks to the partnership, the experiences are educationally sound, grade-specific and encourage connection with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning.

The goal is to help children and parents learn about the importance of water conservation through science and fun, explained Scott Bailey, Visalia district manager.

In addition to the grand prize, classes can compete for varying levels of cash prizes to be used for classroom supplies. For details on the contest and to register, visit calwater.com/challenge. The contest ends February 27, 2015.

Over the course of four to eight weeks, classrooms will develop and implement a project focused on water, following project-based learning methodology. Students will create and submit a portfolio, including project goals, student research, science and/or engineering experimentation, actions to solve a local water issue and public outreach efforts. Teachers will have access to technical, expert and monetary support through online resources, on-call teacher consultants from WestEd K12 Alliance and up to 20 grants of $500 each (chosen by lottery) to help complete classroom projects.

One component of the competition is the Cal Water Town (calwater.com/town), an online interactive game that teaches children about water and the importance of conservation.

For more information, call District Manager Scott Bailey at 624-1600.

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Sequoia Prompt Care provides care for general illnesses and offers everything from physicals to workers' compensation care.

Second Sequoia Prompt Care Opens in Visalia

Staff Reports

Sequoia Prompt Care, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District, opened its second location on November 10 in Visalia.

The new Sequoia Prompt Care is located at 820 W. Akers St., Suite 100, inside Sequoia Medical Plaza at the corner of Akers Street and Cypress Avenue. The first Sequoia Prompt Care opened in 2011 at 1110 S. Ben Maddox Way, Suite B.

Sequoia Prompt Care provides care for general illnesses, and offers everything from physicals to workers' compensation care. It also allows patients to skip the waiting room with Quick Pass. Patients can register for Quick Pass at the second site by calling 624-6800, then wait at home or at the office. Patients receive a call when an exam room is ready, allowing them to skip the waiting room. At Sequoia Prompt Care, patients are seen by either a physician, a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner.

Both sites are open seven days a week from 9am to 8pm on weekdays and from 10am to 6pm on weekends. Walk-in patients are welcome. Cash and most insurance are accepted. For more information, visit sequoiapromptcare.org.

Established in 1963, Kaweah Delta Health Care District is the only facility with Magnet status in the San Joaquin Valley serving children and adults, and is the only trauma center between Fresno and Bakersfield. The district offers a comprehensive scope of services including everything from a well-respected pediatric hospitalist program to nationally recognized orthopedic and cancer programs. For more information, visit www.kaweahdelta.org or follow Kaweah Delta on Twitter or Facebook.

State Health Director Recommends Flu Vaccine

Staff Reports

With the influenza season now upon us, Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and state health officer, urges Californians to get a flu shot. While flu activity in California remains low with no laboratory confirmed outbreaks or deaths, now is the time to get immunized.

Influenza can cause severe disease across all age groups. According to the California influenza surveillance report recently published, there were 404 influenza-associated deaths reported in persons under 65 years of age in California during the 2013-14 influenza season. This was the highest number of deaths reported to CDPH since the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza and related complications are the eighth leading cause of death in the United States, associated with thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year in the U.S.

CDC recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older, including pregnant women. Healthy people between two and 49 years of age, who are not pregnant, may opt for the nasal spray flu vaccine instead of a shot.

All 2014-2015 flu vaccines protects against an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus and an influenza B virus, and some also protect against a second influenza B virus. This year's flu vaccine contains the same strains that were part of the 2013-14 flu vaccine.

To stop the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses, Californians should also:

- Stay home when sick.
- Cover a cough or sneeze by using your elbow or a tissue and properly disposing of the used tissue.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding contact with your eyes, nose and mouth.

To find a flu vaccine location near you, visit www.flu.gov.

Visalia Chamber of Commerce Launches Two New Programs

Steve Pastis

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce started two new programs this month, a member referral program designed to increase membership and the "110% Club" to expand chamber benefits.

In the member referral program, chamber members who bring in new businesses are eligible for $50 reductions off their membership fees.

"There are a lot of people who champion the chamber," said Gail Zurek, who was named its CEO in September. "This program rewards their advocacy."

She explained that the program is about building relationships, not just between the chamber and businesses, but also among member businesses. Businesses can benefit by sharing information, including about the chamber.

Nicola Wissler, communications and special projects coordinator, and Chamber CEO Gail Zurek.

"Small businesses say, 'This is what's working for me and you should try it,'" Zurek said. "This happens anyway, but I don't think it happens in a formal way – maybe over coffee or over a drink. They'll say, 'We had a question about X, Y or Z, and the chamber was pretty helpful.'"

Zurek brought in this idea from a previous position. "When I worked for the Better Business Bureau, we did something like this, except the Better Business Bureau capped it and it was smaller," she said.

The new "110% Club" is a program used by other chambers, such as the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber in northern California. "The chamber provides an option for businesses to contribute above and beyond their membership dues to special projects," said Zurek.

"The 110% Club is a way for members to show their support for the chamber and the help we provide," said Nicola Wissler, communications and special projects coordinator. "The extra 10% is funding that we use to provide our programs. Anyone who pays the 10% will get recognition, such as an asterisk next to their name in our membership directory and in other publications."

The chamber can do things businesses don't have time to do for themselves, according to Zurek. "There's never a time you reach the end of your 'to do' list," she said. "Trying to be collaborative is a difficult task. For organizations to do their work, things become a cycle. The chamber is about pulling you off of this hamster wheel.

"Businesses ask, 'How do we develop leaders? How do we connect with public agencies that are developing policies that are affecting our business? And how do we collaborate with other businesses and organizations?'

"The marketing effort that the chamber does is really one wheel on a vehicle," she continued. "The chamber does a lot with leadership development and advocacy and public policy."

Zurek has confidence in the success of both new programs. "The chamber has some amazing advocates," she said. "They want to see Visalia grow. They want to see a strong community and a strong business climate."

Tulare County Installs Mobile Showers in East Porterville

Tulare County installed mobile showers for residents affected by the drought in East Porterville on Monday, November 17. The mobile shower units are available at no cost and are open to the general public.

The Tulare County Office of Emergency Services (OES) has been overseeing the project that has involved various county departments and partners, including the Board of Supervisors, the Resource Management Agency (RMA) and the City of Porterville.

"We want to make sure that the basic needs of those impacted by the drought are being met," said District 5 Supervisor Mike Ennis. "People have been bathing out of buckets, but as we get into the colder months, that becomes very difficult and uncomfortable. Everybody deserves to be able to take a nice hot shower, and that's what we're providing."

The mobile units will run hot water throughout and consist of 26 individual shower rooms, including those that are ADA compliant. A central heating system will provide warmth inside the trailers. Each shower has its own entrance and dressing area, as well as dedicated areas for men, women and children. Outdoor sinks for tooth brushing and shaving will also be available, along with on-site porta-potties. Users must bring their own toiletries, hygiene products and towels as these items will not be provided.

Supervisor Mike Ennis opens showers in East Porterville.

The showers will be located at Iglesia Emmanuel, 185 S. Leggett St. in Porterville. Minors must be accompanied by an adult, and security will be provided to ensure the safety of all users.

"We worked very hard to create the right setting to meet the needs of the community and make people feel safe and comfortable using it," said Andrew Lockman, OES manager. "The church is a familiar and trusted place for the community and has been a fantastic partner for us."

The mobile shower units' hours of operation are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 5am to 9pm; Wednesday from 5am to 5pm; and Sunday from 1-9pm. For more information, call Tulare County OES at 624-7495.

Mike Drake Appointed Interim Tulare County Librarian

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) has appointed Deputy County Librarian Mike Drake as interim county librarian. Drake's appointment follows the October 3 resignation of previous library director Jeff Scott.

"We are very fortunate to have an extremely capable Deputy County Librarian, who I know will do a great job filling in during the interim period while we find a permanent replacement," said TCBOS Chairman Phil Cox. "We are confident that Mike will do a first-rate job during this period of transition."

Drake received his master of library and information science degree from the University at Albany (New York), and his B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin. He has worked for the Tulare County Library for ten years, first as the Visalia Branch manager, and then as the Deputy County Librarian. Prior to that, Drake worked for the San Joaquin Valley Library System and the Fresno County Public Library.

"I am grateful to the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and the county administrative officer for this opportunity to be the County Librarian during this interim period," said Drake. "I am dedicated to the hard working and excellent staff at the Tulare County Library and committed to providing the best possible service to the residents of this county."

In his new role, Drake's primary duties will be to oversee the day-to-day operations of 15 library branches throughout the county that provide reader's advisory, information retrieval and programming services. According to County Administrative Officer Jean Rousseau, the process for finding a permanent county librarian has already begun and is expected to be concluded by February.

High-Speed Rail Certification Workshop Held in Visalia

In a small room in the back of Visalia's Employment Connection Center, representatives from the California Department of General Services (DGS), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) were brought together by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CAHSRA) to show local small businesses how to become small business certified and how to bid for work on upcoming High-Speed Rail projects.

Central Valley business owners came to the November 5 workshop to learn how their companies can participate in the largest public works project this state has ever seen. Many of those in attendance were minority-owned or considered micro-businesses. These special statuses are important because California's High-Speed Rail Authority has set an ambitious goal of reaching a 30% small business participation rate on the project. Throughout the course of this project, the Authority's goal centers on contracting its work to Small Business Enterprises (SBE), of which 10% is to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and 3% to Disadvantaged Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE).

To reach its goals, the Authority has created numerous lines of communication with private companies by holding workshops to bridge the gap between agency needs and small business services.

High-Speed Rail Authority's Contract Compliance Officer Peggy Chiok makes her presentation.

"Events like this one and others planned for the near future are proof of the productive partnerships that are being formed between local, state and federal agencies in order to benefit the Central Valley's Small Business Community," said Jose Camarena, the California High-Speed Rail Authority's director of contract compliance.

Entrepreneurs from the dairy, solar, construction and engineering industries were in attendance at the three-and-a-half-hour event, including Bill Daniel, a representative from Master Suites. Daniel said this workshop was helpful because it is good for companies "to know what is going on and what the time frame looks like for a project this big. We are looking for who is here and what we need to know, and we got that from this workshop."

At the meeting, Daniel shook hands, exchanged business cards and met with prospective clients. He was one of many businessmen at the event who came out of the workshop with a better understanding of what different types of services it will take to complete this project.

According to the Authority's latest small business report, it has contracts with more than 156 small businesses, 39 of which are based in the Central Valley. Although the first building to make way for High-Speed Rail was only taken down in July, the project can already account for 832 full time jobs. As the project continues construction in the Valley, the amount of small businesses and individuals participating in the project is expected to increase even further.

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Lawsuit

Continued from p. 1

County Animal Control is considered a "kill shelter." This is not news to the county, and it has tried different strategies to increase the adoption rate. Grenseman's first boss felt strongly that the county ought to do something for these animals other than simply put them down. One of those strategies included hiring Michelle Shanley to help the county decrease the kill rate.

Shanley was in an uphill battle because county protocols had to be followed. The shelter can only keep an animal for six days before it is euthanized, a fate that befell many a Mooney Grove cat. But if the animal had a sniffle or cough, they could be euthanized immediately to halt the spread of disease throughout the facility. Once the dog or cat was tagged to be put down, the animal was injected with pentobarbital, their remains incinerated and then put in the garbage.

Shanley and her partner, who also worked for Animal Control, didn't feel as though they had the support they needed to change the culture of killing, so they took another job in Fresno that did support their ideas. In March of 2013, Julia Jimenez was hired to replace Shanley, in what Jimenez considered her dream job. A panel of Tulare County supervisors--a panel including Grenseman--interviewed Jimenez and decided she was the right person for the job. The panel decided to set a first year goal of raising the adoption rate from 700 to 1,000 animals. Grenseman, Jimenez' direct boss, said, "Julia was the best employee I've ever had in terms of dedication to her job and her passion to save the animals. She went above and beyond the call of duty and had the skills and abilities to lower the kill rates in Tulare County. She was well on her way of reaching the county's goals."

But Jimenez' attempts to change the culture from euthanizing to adoption caused friction inside Animal Control. More adoptions meant more work. When the animal population increases, the enclosures need to be cleaned morning and night and not just once a day. More vaccinations and feedings need to be done, and the animals have to be handled more often because of the increase in off-site adoption clinics. There is also paperwork involved in an adoption that is not required when an animal is euthanized.

In retaliation to Jimenez' efforts, coworkers allegedly created a hostile work environment, which towards the end, made Jimenez physically ill. Jimenez was suddenly being accused of shooting heroin, exposing her breasts and stealing from Petco during adoption events. Her coworkers allegedly made continual comments about her breasts, attempting to touch them. They allegedly created a fake Facebook page to send false messages to her acquaintances, and showed up at her house to bang on her door making threats of bodily injury. Two of her coworkers allegedly sent defamatory letters out to the community claiming that Jimenez was of unchaste character.

The initial complaint and many of the allegations leveled against Jimenez and Grenseman originate from a coworker who had motive to retaliate against Jimenez. The husband of this coworker was prosecuted and sentenced to a state prison for his role in committing arson. During the course of the arson, Jimenez's husband, who is a Tulare County fire fighter, responded to the fire and was injured. The coworker's husband was consequently arrested, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced, and sent to jail. The coworker became aware of the fact that Jimenez was married to the firefighter who was injured and blames him for her husband's arrest. The coworker herself was allegedly involved in the arson, by driving her husband to and from the scene of the fire. Jimenez alleges in the suit that the coworker coordinated a plan to harass her to the point of driving her from her employment.

After Grenseman was made aware of the workplace violations as written in the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), he had a series of three meetings with Lutz, his superior. What disturbed Grenseman the most was the unnatural amount of venom directed at Jimenez by Lutz. There were things that Jimenez was doing that Lutz did not approve of, but they were so minor that they didn't merit the anger or yelling. During one of the meetings, Grenseman reported that Lutz referred to Jimenez as "that Mexican woman" and declared that she will "never be promoted." Lutz is being named in the suit for the racial/ethnic harassment.

'A Toxic Work Environment'

According to attorney Marguerite Melo, "Whenever a county lawsuit comes up, everybody is having sex with everyone else." A similar strain of behavior emerged when researching the Mooney Grove cat article in December of 2013. What started as a quaint story about a little old man feeding cats in the park took an unsavory turn of restraining orders, affairs, hunting parties and unjustified firings. I asked John Sarsfield, one of the lawyers on the case, why county employees are seemingly so out of control. He said that it starts at the top and that the county is not enforcing its own personnel policies.

According to the suit filed with Tulare County Superior Court, "Additionally, it became public knowledge among the workers at the animal shelter that Defendant xxxxxx had performed oral copulation on a fellow co-worker in the rear of a county-owned Animal Control vehicle following a "round up" of animals. These sexual activities taking place in county vehicles and at the animal shelter by some workers were often discussed during work hours at the animal shelter. Plaintiff Jimenez did not join or participate in these discussions and was uncomfortable in hearing these matters being discussed in such a common-place manner, adding to the hostile work environment."

Ironically, the same co-worker who sent defamatory letters accusing Jimenez of unchaste character was herself giving blowjobs in the back of the animal control vehicle.

Grenseman an Honored Member of U.S. Military

Grenseman is an honored member of our United States military. He was on the ground floor of developing a system of warfare simulation that was used during Desert Storm. According to Grenseman, the invasion of Kuwait actually went better than the computer models projected, and the military credits this modeling system for Desert Storm's huge success. Grenseman received a Navy commendation medal for his work. He was also awarded a meritorious service medal for his body of work in the military and received a letter of appreciation from President Bill Clinton. He gave our country 25 years of service then gave Tulare County 13 more years of service where he was regularly commended for his good work. On September 16, Cheryl Duerksen, the Director of HHSA, wrote a letter of recommendation for Grenseman saying, "In all matter related to his work, Mr. Grenseman brings a keen intellect, sound judgment, well-articulated ethical principles, and unwavering commitment to public service, Peers, staff and the community welcome his participation across events and consistently seek out his input, assistance and expertise."

On December 4, 2013, two HHSA officers showed up at Tulare County Animal Control. They marched Grenseman into his office, told him to gather a few of his personal things, then in front of all his subordinates, on either side of him, marched him out to his car. According to the suit, "being 'walked off' is a procedure designed to humiliate an employee by publicly relieving them of their duties, and escorting them out of the worksite, for all to see the spectacle. On information and belief, the order to 'walk off' Plaintiff Grenseman was given by Defendant Lutz. There was no legitimate reason to exercise this procedure on Plaintiff Grenseman. Following the 'walk off', Plaintiff Grenseman was placed on administrative time off (ATO)."

Grenseman was told that he was being escorted off of the premise "to ensure the integrity of the investigation." He would not find out why he was under investigation until several months later, and after many distressing encounters with county staff. When he did find out, according to Grenseman, he saw that the county didn't have a shred of evidence against him and the bulk of allegations originate from a disgruntled employee whose husband is sitting in prison for arson.

Following the humiliation of the walk off, being under investigation and put on administrative leave, Grenseman suffered a heart attack a week later.

It is still unknown why the county felt that Grenseman posed such a threat that he needed to be escorted off of county property, especially in light of the fact that, just two months prior, he was considered a model employee. Jimenez, who was also "walked off," had several letters of commendation about her work ethic and passion for animal--but her personal files were confiscated by the county when she was put on administrative leave. They have not been returned.

Grenseman and Jimenez are suing the county for loss of income, defamation and failure to enforce the Federal Employment and Housing Authority's rules on sexual/racial/ethnic harassment. They are also suing for compensatory damages, attorney's fees and punitive damages. The court date is set for May 10, 2015 and assigned to Bret Hillman's courtroom.

The *Valley Voice* did not solicit comment from the county for this article. A follow-up article will appear after the county has responded to the allegations. The *Valley Voice* will not name the four other defendants in this suit until the county responds.

Jimenez Responds

As the Tulare County Volunteer and Animal Adoptions Coordinator I gavemore than 100 percent of my time and effort to saving the lives of the poor and unfortunate animals that were impounded at the Tulare County Animal Shelter. The Tulare County Animal Shelter has one of the highest kill rates and often the highest kill rate in the state.

During my time at the shelter I more than doubled the rate of the animals that were adopted by forever families. Tragically, my efforts to reduce the killing of these animals was opposed and ultimately stopped by the administration of HHSA and animal control workers that are named in my lawsuit. Reducing the kill rate caused more work for shelter personnel. We had to continue to care for the animals by feeding, vaccinating and cleaning up after them. It also caused more money to do this but I was successful in getting donations from community groups that believed in this cause. Nevertheless, it was easier and less work for HHSA Administration and kennel staff to kill them and burn them up than take care of them and adopt them. For trying to do something good for the animals, I was harassed, slandered, bullied and ultimately fired to the delight and joy of HHSA administration who was more than happy to maintain their high kill shelter and kill perfectly good, innocent animals. The animal kill culture of HHSA administration is unacceptable.

Julia Jimenez

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Mooney Grove Master Plan Presented to the Public

Catherine Doe

An eclectic group of Tulare County residents gathered November 6 at Café 210 to discuss the future of Mooney Grove Park. The workshop was put on by the county to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the "Mooney Grove Park 20-Year Conceptual Plan" put together by Kleinfelder, an engineering company out of Fresno.

Jason Paul of Kleinfelder, Assistant County Administrative Officer Mary Lindsay, Senior Administrative Analyst John Hess and Neil Pilegard, head of parks and services, were available over the course of three hours to answer the public's questions. Six tables were set up for the public to review the proposed map of the park and read the county's 20-year plan. The public was encouraged to fill out a form to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations.

Hess and Paul will be compiling all the comments garnered from this meeting to be presented at the next public meeting on December 10, also taking place at Café 210. All public input will be considered before the plan receives final approval from the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in January at a meeting to be announced.

Old timers, baby boomers and millennials were all in attendance and desired to see the park recapture some of its former grandeur. The older attendees reminisced about the days when the park had a zoo, carnival rides, a dance pavilion and an old fashioned carousel, among other attractions. Unfortunately, the 20-year plan doesn't bring back any of those amenities, but does add new ones and hopes to repair some of the older structures. The younger crowd has also enjoyed the addition of a new disc golf course made possible by Visalia resident Chuck Woody. The golf course has attracted California's statewide tournament. Woody's next goal is to attract the world's disc golf tournament.

A few elements of the Mooney Grove Park 20-year Conceptual Master Plan have already been realized, such as the new History of Farm Labor and Agricultural Museum. Several engineering firms were interviewed in 2008 after Tulare County received a $1.45 million grant to build the museum. The museum had its grand opening in November of 2009.

Kleinfelder beat out their competitors, and a master plan for Mooney Grove was developed over the course of several years, in conjunction with the development and construction of the Ag Museum. According to Hess, "the 20-Year Master Plan was one phase of Kleinfelder's services to the county. Kleinfelder was paid $160,300 for the development of the Master Plan and will be paid $36,610 to facilitate solicitation of public comments and presentation to the board of supervisors."

There are two main components of the 20-year plan: Renovating and maintaining the two museums, one quite old and the other brand new, and creating a "park in a park."

The goal of the 20-year plan is to respect the park's origins, when the main mode of transportation was horse and buggy, while "gracefully accommodating the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and meeting the needs of the citizens of the county." Currently, the internal circulation in the park leaves large areas of Mooney Grove underutilized and has pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles competing for the same road space. The "park in a park" will consist of pedestrian walkways, eliminating this problem. The master plan also includes recreating an Indian Village and a turn-of-the-century Main Street modeled on actual local historic buildings that will be located next to or inside the pedestrian area. Also planned is the construction of a grist mill which will be operated using the existing irrigation well as a source of water.

John Trask and Jason Paul, of Kleinfelder, discuss the proposed map of Mooney Grove.

Cameron Creek runs through the park and is considered an underutilized feature. Tulare Irrigation District will create a sinking basin in the park and will landscape Cameron Creek making it look more like a natural waterway.

Besides the pedestrian walkways, the reconfiguration will lead to the development of roundabouts, new bridges and centralized parking. More picnic pavilions and restrooms are also proposed. Food trucks would be parked in the entryway to both museums, Main Street and the Indian Village.

A long-term goal for the park is to change the exit and entrance to Avenue 272. The county's plan to expand Mooney Boulevard to six lanes will make the current entrance impractical.

Some features of the park have fallen into such disrepair that they are slated for removal. Scheduled to be removed are various concrete foundations, some old BBQ pits, the concession building and the bandstand foundation. Potentially slated for removal are the lily goldfish ponds. The cost to renovate these structures and bring them up to code would be prohibitive. But if a group or individual want to raise money to renovate this feature it would be considered by the board of supervisors. The removal of these features will add to the green space available at the park and will not be replaced with other structures.

Jessie Snow, the contractor who built the boat house, said that the 1960s construction of the concession building is solid and if it were on anyone else's property they wouldn't tear it down. The concession stand needs a good cleaning, a few windows replaced and an updated kitchen. "I want to visit Mooney Grove and buy a hamburger or eat some Mexican food," said Snow.

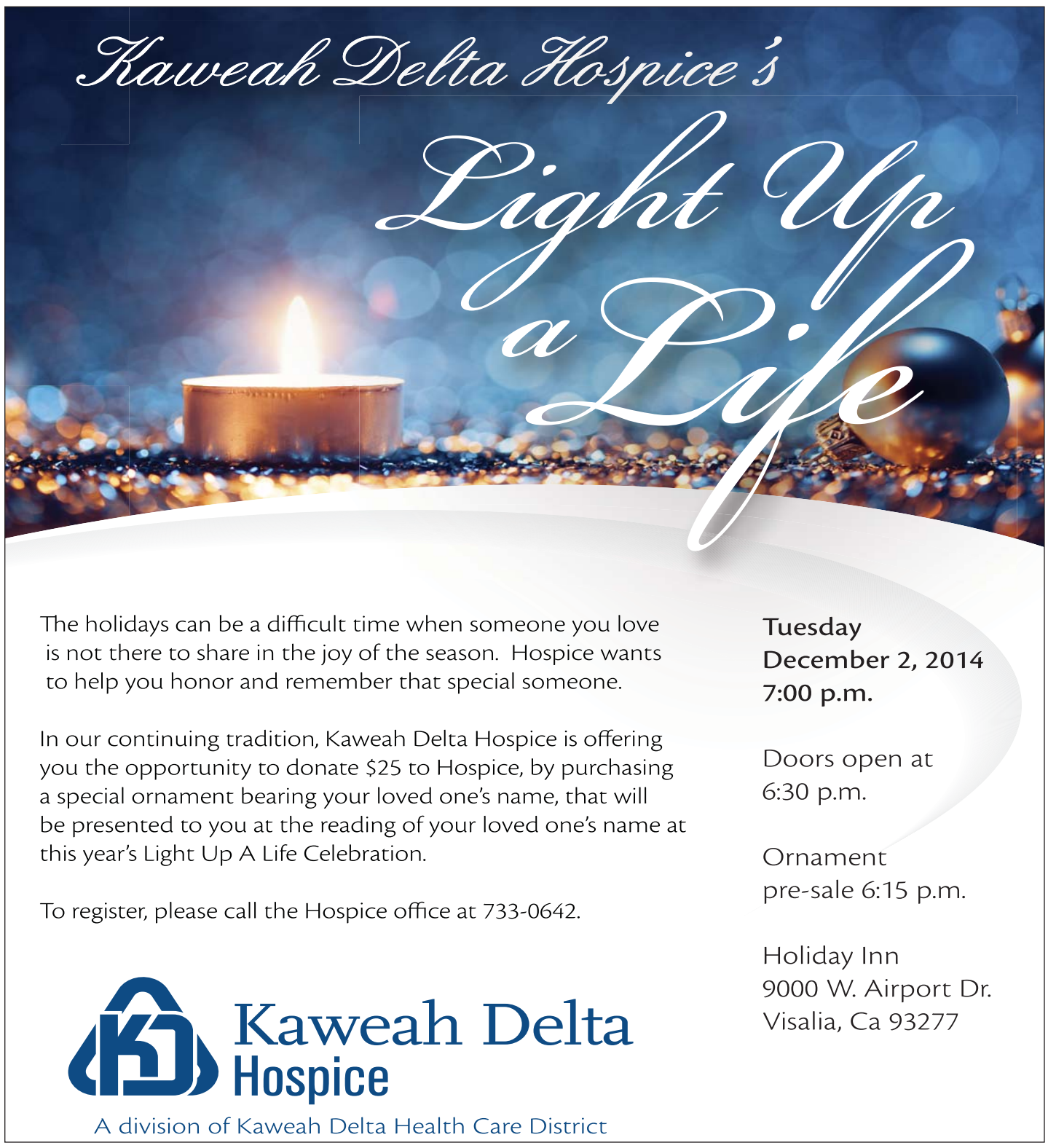
According to Paul, food preparation regulations have changed dramatically since the concession stand was built and major renovations would be needed to bring it up to code. More popular right now, Paul said, are food vendors or food trucks that sell Mexican, Chinese and specialty items. It was unclear if public input could further the debate on keeping the concession stand from being demolished.

Another major criticism of the plan is that, in 20 years' time, many of those most involved in bringing the park back to life will have passed away. Paul explained that this is a General Plan just like Visalia's 20-year plan, only on a much smaller scale. It is a blueprint for what the county plans to do with the park over the next 20 years. If the public has certain priorities it wants to be taken care of first, then that is what the meetings are for.

For those who want to provide feedback about the 20-year plan but cannot attend the meetings please email John Hess at jhess@co.tulare.ca.us. All comments will be complied and presented at the next December meeting.

'The Real Mooney Grove Project' Responds

Mary Bryant of the Real Mooney Grove Project says, "As before, we are opposing the county's 20-year plan in all aspects and areas. The county is still not acknowledging the issues that can be turned around and make the park what it once was--a safe, fun, and profitable DIAMOND to the people and the entire county. We want picnic/playground clean and safe, rowboats returned, concession for refreshments up and open for business, the fish pond restored, Lagoon repaired, the vegetation and plants replanted on islands and trees like Mr. Mooney stipulated All buildings made ADA compliant. Maintenance is to be DRASTICALLY improved. I don't consider anything in their plan to be worth the time or money and the museum should be put on hold until all buildings, safety issues, existing buildings etc. are resolved."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Stillwell

Continued from p. 1

will be permanently without water.

The list of expenses incurred when each house lost water for 10 months varied by the size of the house, yard and family. The Mortons have an acre-and-a-half of lawn, landscaping and fruit trees, a two-bedroom home and two children. Their expenses ranged from having to replace their pump to hauling water to their home to trips to the laundromat and friends' homes so the children could bathe. They spent over $7,000.

But more than the expense of dealing with a dry well was the pain and suffering experienced by Sissi, who has a chronic kidney disease. She needs daily peritoneal dialysis, which she does at home and requires clean water. The stress of providing clean water for his wife's dialysis with a dry well was very emotionally and physically stressful.

The Rodriguezes have two children but a smaller parcel of land. Their expenses were around $4,000 for the ten months their well went dry. The other two homes spent approximately the same but still have dry wells.

The larger expense is the depreciation in value of the four homes. Not only did all four homes lose their reliable source of water, but they also lost their beautiful view of grazing fields, foothills and the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Before CEMEX started producing gravel they built an 18-foot berm to shield the homes from the noise.

The view from the Mortons' property before Stillwell mining operations began.

The current view.

CEMEX then decided to construct the recharge trench on top of the berm.

Mark Avedian, of Avedian Properties, said that a house would lose half of its value if it lost its view and did not have a reliable water source. Another realtor said that if a resident's well goes dry it would cost at least $20,000 to dig a new well. But with the underground aquifer being sucked into the ponds created by the gravel mine pits, a new well, no matter how deep, may not produce water.

The Mortons' home was recently appraised at $120,000. If the home value went down by half as a result of the Stillwell Quarry, that would mean a loss of $60,000. When including the out-of-pocket expenses, that would be a total of $67,000. The other three homes are on smaller plots and of differing ages and size, and range in appraisal between $60,000 and $80,000. The total losses for all three homes would be around $120,000.

A letter written September 29 by the Tulare County Farm Bureau states, in part, "…we believe CEMEX should be accountable for the damages done to people and property near the Stillwell plant site operations, and be compelled to make them whole." When taking account of all of the damages done by the Stillwell Mine to the four homes, the total would be approximately $180,000.

The residents are considering taking legal action if Tulare County, which issued the permit, and CEMEX, which operates the mine, do not provide adequate compensation for their financial loss and pain and suffering.

The graduating cadets of Porterville College's Fire Fighter 1 Academy Class #31

Porterville College Fire Academy Graduates 28 Cadets

Porterville College honored 28 cadets at the Fire Fighter 1 Academy Class #31 graduation, held in the PC gymnasium on November 13.

Cadets Amanda Barbosa and Cliff Wiggins were recognized for serving as the class "Battalion Chiefs." In addition to completing all other training and study required of Fire Academy cadets, the class battalion chiefs assume the additional responsibility of maintaining class decorum, lining the class up for inspection each day, assigning equipment set-up tasks, leading the class in all classroom and field training activities and assisting the instructional staff as needed. Wiggins is a veteran who is currently a reserve for the City of Porterville Fire Department. Barbosa is a reserve firefighter for the City of Dinuba.

Recognition was also given to six cadets for serving as "Company Captains" under Barbosa and Wiggins. They are Jose Ramos, Reggimel Calo, Carlos Cervantes, Mikal Sanchez, Donald Smith and Scott Scheline.

Each year, by secret ballot, the cadets select a class member whom they felt went "above and beyond the call of duty" in assisting others with hand-on skills practice, classroom study or in other ways during the difficult and rigorous 15 week academy. Reggimel Calo was overwhelmingly selected for the "Class Leadership" award by his fellow cadets.

Per state fire marshal rules, all cadets in the SFM Accredited Fire Academy must score at least 80% on each written examination and there was much competition among cadets to have the highest overall score at the end of the academy. Receiving the "Top Score" award this year was Lawrence Burgett with an overall score of 98%.

Wiggins was given the class "Allegiance Award" for presenting the colors and leading the flag salute each day, as he also did during the graduation ceremony.

New Asian Citrus Psyllid Detected Near Exeter

The Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's office announced on November 17 that one additional Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) has been detected on a trap south of the city of Exeter. The latest interception was confirmed by the California Department of Agriculture (CDFA). Maps and current information are available at http://agcomm.co.tulare.ca.us/default/.

CDFA has already begun to saturate the affected area with detection traps in order to determine the extent of any infestation. The United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) and CDFA will work collaboratively to determine what steps are taken next.

The Asian citrus psyllid is an invasive species of grave concern because it can carry the disease huanglongbing (HLB), also known as citrus greening. All citrus and closely related species are susceptible hosts for both the insect and the disease. There is no cure once a tree becomes infected. The diseased tree will decline in health, producing bitter, misshaped fruit until it dies. To date, HLB has only been detected in the state on a residential property in Hacienda Heights in Los Angeles County.

County Agricultural Commissioner Marilyn Kinoshita announced that her staff will continue to support the efforts of the county's $750 million citrus industry, as well as local residential citrus owners. "I want to emphasize that citrus fruit is safe to eat and the disease is not harmful to human health," she said.

Residents in the area who think they have seen the pest are urged to call CDFA's Pest Hotline at 1-800-491-1899, or the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at 684-3350.

FoodLink conducted a Stuff the Trolley food drive at Golden Oak Elementary School in Visalia on November 14. Donated food will be used for FoodLink's holiday food baskets and Back Pack Program, which provides food to children when other resources are not available. Upcoming Stuff the Trolley locations in Visalia are: Friday, November 21 at 7:45am at Cottonwood Creek School; Friday, November 21 at 10am at Royal Oaks School; and Wednesday, November 26 at Keller Williams on Main Street. For more information, call 651-3663.

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Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Seek Public Input About Proposed Fee Increases

Staff Reports

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are seeking public input to gauge support for proposed entrance, wilderness permit and certain campsite fee increases. The public is invited to comment through December 9.

The fee program is critical, as 80% of fees collected stay within the two parks to maintain and improve facilities and services that benefit park visitors.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are strong economic engines for the region and local communities. In 2013, nearly 1.48 million park visitors contributed $111.7 million in communities and supported nearly 1,400 jobs in the local area. Previous fee increases have not impacted visitation levels in a negative way. This proposed fee increase is part of a larger National Park Service initiative to standardize fees in similar national parks across the country.

The proposed single vehicle entrance fee would increase from $20 to $30 for a seven-day vehicle pass to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The parks' annual pass would increase from $30 to $50. The current rate of $10 per individual (walk-in, bicycle) would increase to $15. Currently the charge of $10 per individual traveling on motorcycle would change to $25 per motorcycle for a seven-day pass. There would be no changes to flat-rate fees for commercial groups.

The Interagency Annual Pass, which is honored at U.S. national parks and federal recreation lands, will not be affected by the proposed fee increase and will remain at $80. The Interagency Senior Pass will remain at $10 (one lifetime fee), and the Annual Military Pass and the Senior Pass will remain free.

The National Park Service will continue to offer entrance fee-free opportunities to enjoy the parks. In 2015, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks will offer 12 fee-free days. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/seki/park-news/seki2015feefreeentrancedates.htm.

"We are committed to providing a quality experience at a good value for our visitors," said Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks' Superintendent Woody Smeck. "The additional revenue will help us improve access to popular destinations like Giant Forest, Crystal Cave and the High Sierra."

Sequoia and Kings Canyon have been collecting fees for more than 100 years. The current park entrance fees have been in place since 2006 when a seven-day pass for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks was increased from $10 to $20 per vehicle. In 1913, Sequoia National Park was collecting a $1 entrance fee and General Grant National Park (now part of Kings Canyon National Park) collected a 50¢ fee. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, $1.50 in 1913 is equivalent to $36.07 in 2014.

Lodgepole Amphitheater is among the park sites that benefit from fee dollars. Photo by the National Parks Service.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are proposing modifying wilderness fees from the current $15 per permit to $10 per permit plus $5 per person. Single hikers will continue to pay $15. Parties of two will only experience a price increase of $5. Permit fees for maximum size parties of 15 would be $85. The proposed fee structure is more equitable, because it is based primarily on party size, rather than a flat rate. The proposed fee increase would allow the park to maintain current staffing levels and continue to provide both a wilderness reservation service and face-to-face permit issuance at park trailheads.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are proposing to raise camping fees at the Sunset Campground from $18 to $22 per night per campsite, increase fees for mid-size group campsites from $35 to $40 a night per site, and increase fees for large group campsites $10 a night, to range between $40 to $70 per night per site. The proposed increase to the campsite fees for Sunset Campground and the mid-size group campsites are needed to cover the costs of using the www.recreation.gov reservation system and additional projects to benefit park users. These campsites are under-used and not well-marketed as available before campers' arrival. In addition, by placing midsize group campsites on the reservation system, the sites will be used by groups of the appropriate size.

Two other campgrounds with a 19-year track record on the reservation system—Lodgepole and Dorst Creek—serve as successful models for how the reservation system is expected to work in the new locations. Over 42,000 people benefit from reservations at Lodgepole and Dorst Creek campgrounds each summer.

The public is invited to submit comments electronically via the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at parkplanning.nps.gov/seki. Click on: Proposal to Increase Fees at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Comment will also be accepted in writing (hand-delivery, mail or fax). To submit written comments, you may mail or hand-deliver your comments to: Superintendent, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Attn: Proposal to Increase Fees, 47050 Generals Highway, Three Rivers, CA 93271. In addition, faxed comments will be accepted at 565-4202.

Comments submitted by e-mail, and anonymous comments will not be accepted. Bulk comments in any format submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. All public comments must be received by December 9.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information, you should be aware that your entire comment–including your personal identifying information–may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask the National Park Service in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, NPS cannot guarantee that they will be able to do so.

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Briefly...

Sierra Bancorp Completes Santa Clara Valley Bank Acquisition

Sierra Bancorp completed its acquisition of Santa Clara Valley Bank, N.A. (SCVE) on November 14. The amount paid by Sierra Bancorp to the shareholders and warrant holders of SCVE was approximately $15.3 million.

As announced on July 17, Sierra Bancorp entered into a definitive agreement to acquire SCVE, with $129 million in assets and branches in Santa Paula, Santa Clarita and Fillmore. Each of the acquired branches will remain open and will be rebranded as Bank of the Sierra branches. Additionally, SCVE customers will now have access to Bank of the Sierra's enhanced suite of products and services, as well as the convenience of 25 branch locations in Central California.

"With the acquisition complete, ensuring our new Santa Clara Valley Bank customers enjoy a seamless transition will be our major focus," said Jim Holly, Bank of the Sierra CEO. "Although we have other projects and endeavors, it is important not to lose sight of the personal touch that a community bank can offer," continued Holly. "Our personal touch and community focus is an important part of our continued success."

Sierra Bancorp is the holding company for Bank of the Sierra, which is in its 37th year of operations and at $1.6 billion in assets is the largest independent bank headquartered in the South San Joaquin Valley. The company now has approximately 440 employees and conducts business through 28 branch offices, an online branch, a real estate industries center, and an agricultural credit center.

Public Comments on Wilderness Stewardship Plan Now Available

The full text of all comments received during the public review of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park's Wilderness Stewardship Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (WSP/DEIS) are now available. The public comment period occurred from June 27 through August 25, when Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks solicited public input. The full text of all correspondence received during the comment period and more information about the Wilderness Stewardship Plan is available on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/sekiwild. A CD version of the full text of the public comments can be obtained by calling Nancy Hendricks, environmental protection specialist, at 565-3102.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks received more than 245 comments with 275 signatures during the public review period, which generated comments on approximately 75 different topics.

The staff at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks is currently in the process of updating the final Wilderness Stewardship Plan. It is anticipated that the final Wilderness Stewardship Plan and final Environmental Impact Statement will be completed in the spring.

Visalia Police Chief Colleen Mestas Announces New Police Lieutenant

Visalia Police Chief Colleen Mestas announced the promotion of Sergeant Osvaldo "Ozzie" Dominguez to the position of police lieutenant. November 10, 2014

Dominguez began his employment with the Visalia Police Department in 2005. Prior to his employment, he served the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office where he worked a variety of assignments. During his employment with the VPD, Dominguez has been assigned to the Patrol Division and Violent Crimes Unit. Additionally, he has served as the department's Spanish speaking public information officer.

In 2011, Dominguez was promoted to sergeant and was assigned to patrol. Last year, he was assigned to the Professional Standards Unit and was also the Department's public information officer. Prior to his promotion, he was assigned as the Violent Crimes Unit sergeant.

Dominguez holds a bachelor of arts degree in history and a master's in public administration. He is also a 2009 graduate of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Visalia program.

Tulare County Association of Realtors Hires Government Affairs Director

The Board of Directors for the Tulare County Association of Realtors has hired Brett Taylor as their new government affairs director.

"As a realtor and member of the Visalia Planning Commission, Brett is an ideal choice to be in charge of advocacy and consumer outreach for our association," said Chris Barbeau, president of the association. "Brett will work with elected government officials, government agencies, local citizens and special interest groups in order to pass legislation that helps promote and protect home ownership."

Taylor is a lifelong resident of Visalia and earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in business from Fresno State University. He is a licensed California real estate agent and previously worked as an appraiser for the Tulare County Assessor's office. Taylor serves on the Tulare County Youth Committee, as a mentor for the Visalia Chamber of Commerce's Young Entrepreneurship Academy.

The Tulare County Association of Realtors currently has more than 800 active members.

Local Hospitals Recognized for Performance Excellence

The Collaborative Alliance for Nursing Outcomes (CALNOC), a leading provider of business intelligence and research on nurse sensitive quality indicators, announced its annual Performance Excellence Awards, recognizing exceptional hospitals for outstanding performance in the areas of reducing hospital acquired pressure ulcers, injuries from falls and infections.

This year's winners included Tulare Local Healthcare District for "Performance Excellence in the Reduction of Injury Falls," Tulare Regional Medical Center for "Performance Excellence in the Reduction of Central Line-Associated Blood Stream Infections," and Sierra View District Hospital and Tulare Regional Medical Center for "Performance Excellence in the Reduction of Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infections."

Local National Parks Announce Entrance Fee Free Days in 2015

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks announced their free admission days for 2015:

- January 19: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 14-16: Presidents Day weekend
- March 4: 75th Anniversary of Kings Canyon National Park
- April 18-19: National Park Week's opening weekend
- August 25: National Park Service's 99th birthday
- September 25: 125th Anniversary of Sequoia National Park
- September 26: National Public Lands Day
- November 11: Veterans Day
- December 13: Celebration of the Nation's Christmas Tree (General Grant Tree)

This fee waiver includes: entrance fees and commercial tour fees. Other fees such as reservation, camping, tours, concession and fees collected by third parties are not included unless stated otherwise.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are strong economic engines for the region and local communities. In 2013, more than 1.5 million park visitors contributed $112 million to the local economy and supported 1,400 jobs related to tourism.

Sandi Miller Joins Family HealthCare Network Board of Directors

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) announced the addition of Sandi Miller as the organization's newest board member. A private, nonprofit community-based organization, FHCN is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The board is composed of both patients and community representatives and is responsible for setting policies for the organization.

Miller joins the board of directors with an extensive background in volunteer work for the betterment of the community. Born and raised in Tulare County, she has a long history of serving the local community, specifically in the area of economic development. Currently, she is the business program coordinator for the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County.

"Being involved in the community remains a high priority for me," said Miller. "I am eager to embrace this new opportunity with Family HealthCare Network where I will assist the citizens of Tulare and Kings Counties in becoming healthier, stronger, better prepared and more capable."

In addition to serving on FHCN's board of directors, Milleris involved as a planning commissioner for the City of Tulare and as well as a planning commission representative to the City of Tulare General Plan 2030 Update Committee. She is also a member of the Economic Development Corporation of Tulare County's Business Response Team.

Lowell Richardson Joins CDI Executive Staff

California Dairies, Inc. (CDI), the second largest dairy-processing cooperative in the nation, welcomed Lowell Richardson to its executive staff as senior vice president human resources on November 1. In this role, Richardson will oversee CDI's HR department with a special focus on labor relations, succession planning and talent management.

Land O'Lakes Foundation Donates $125,000 to Local Hunger Programs

Land O'Lakes Foundation is donating $125,000 to local hunger relief organizations in California as part of its West Coast Hunger Initiative. This is the fifth year that the Land O'Lakes Foundation has made these donations, resulting in $525,000 going toward local hunger relief programs.

The recipient organizations are chosen by the cooperative's member-owners annually. This year grants recipients are: $20,000 to Episcopal Church of the Savior's food programs; $25,000 to FoodLink for Tulare County, Inc.; $15,000 for Gleanings for the Hungry; $12,500 for Orland Pantry; $20,000 for St. Vincent De Paul Center; $20,000 for United Way of Tulare County; and $12,500 for Willows Food Bank.

"Alleviating hunger is a key priority for the Land O'Lakes Foundation," said Lydia Botham, executive director of the Land O'Lakes Foundation. "With the drought conditions and tough economic times, we know the need is great for families in rural Californian communities."

"Land O'Lakes, Inc. and its board and member-owners are committed to helping feed the world, including our neighbors who struggle to put food on the table," said Stephen Mancebo, a Land O'Lakes, Inc. board member. "We live and work in these communities, and we know that improving access to food helps build our neighborhoods and communities."

The West Coast Hunger Initiative is part of Land O'Lakes Foundation's hunger relief giving focus. It is the mission of the foundation to help rural communities prosper and prepare for tomorrow by donating resources that develop and strengthen organizations dedicated to hunger relief, education and community.

The donation is part of Land O'Lakes, Inc.'s commitment to the communities in which our member-owners and employees live and work. Land O'Lakes, Inc., which has a facility in Tulare, has committed to helping sustainably feed an estimated nine billion people by 2050.

Tulare County Library Announces 'Food for Fines'

All Tulare County Library branches are participating in the library's semi-annual "Food for Fines" program during the month of November. Tulare County library patrons who donate will have $1 of what they owe for overdue fines, expired holds or card replacements forgiven for each item. There is no limit to the amount of fine reduction, but it cannot be used to pay for lost or damaged items or processing fees.

Non-perishable food items and bottled water are being accepted, and any library staff member can accept the donations. All items will be given to Foodlink for Tulare County at the end of November. The food and water will be picked up by Foodlink and used to restock the pantries of food banks throughout the county. Items collected from the 15 branches will be distributed in each branch's local community and surrounding areas.

Agriculture

U.S. Farm Production Expenditures Top $367 Billion in 2013

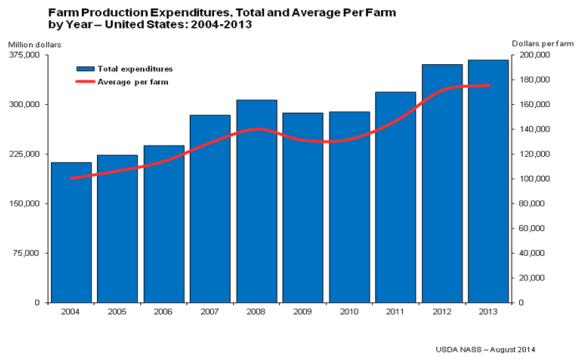
Staff Reports

U.S. farmers spent $367.3 billion on agricultural production in 2013, a 2% increase from 2012, according to the Farm Production Expenditures report, released August 1 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Per farm, the average expenditures total $175,270 compared with $171,309 in 2012, up 2.3%. Crop farms account for the majority of production expenditures in 2013. The average expenditure per crop farm totals $211,659 compared to $143,521 per livestock farm.

Regionally, the largest increase in production expenditures was in the Midwest, which already accounted for nearly all farm production expenditures in the United States. In that region, expenditures rose by $3.7 billion from 2012. For 2013, total expenditures by region are: Midwest, $118.5 billion; Plains, $87.6 billion; West, $76.9 billion; Atlantic, $45.5 billion; and South, $38.8 billion.

The Farm Production Expenditures summary provides the official estimates for production input costs on U.S. farms and ranches. These estimates are based on the results of the nationwide Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), conducted annually by NASS. The entire Farm Production Expenditures 2013 summary is available online at http://bit.ly/FarmExpenditures.



NASS also released the 2014 Land Values report, which includes estimates based on interviews with approximately 11,000 farmers. This report looks at the U.S. farm real estate value, which measures the value of all land and buildings on farms.

In 2014, U.S. farm real estate value averaged $2,950 per acre for 2014, up 8.1% from 2013. Regional changes in the average value of farm real estate ranged from a 16.3% increase in the Northern Plains region to 1.1% increase in the Southeast region. The highest farm real estate values were in the Corn Belt region at $6,370 per acre. The Mountain region had the lowest farm real estate value at $1,070 per acre.

The United States pasture value increased to $1,300 per acre, or 11.1% above 2013. The Southeast region had the smallest percentage increase in pasture value, 0.5% above 2013. The Northern Plains had the highest increase at 26.5%. At the state level, the value of 2014 pasture land ranged from $360 per acre in New Mexico to $13,500 in New Jersey.

Land Values and all other NASS reports are available at www.nass.usda.gov.

USDA Reports 55.3 Million Acres of Irrigated U.S. Farmland

There were 229,237 farms with 55.3 million irrigated acres in the United States, according to the *2013 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey* results, published last week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). According to the irrigation survey results, there were 235,715 farms with 55.5 million irrigated acres.

"The 2013 irrigation survey expands on the data collected about irrigation during the 2012 Census of Agriculture and provides the most comprehensive source of up-to-date information regarding on-farm irrigation in the United States," said NASS Administrator Joseph T. Reilly. "The latest report reveals key data on the agriculture industry's use and stewardship of our nation's water resources."

Data highlights from the 2013 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey include:

• The largest portion of irrigated farmland acres in the United States were dedicated to harvested cropland – including grain and oilseed crops, vegetables, nursery and greenhouse, and hay crops.

• Farmers irrigated nearly 52 million acres of harvested cropland acres in 2013.

• The irrigation results show more irrigated acres with sprinkler systems than gravity irrigation.

• Equipment, in general, is one of the leading irrigation expenditures with farmers and ranchers spending $2.6 billion on irrigation equipment, facilities, land improvements and computer technology in 2013.

• The total amount of water used in 2013 was 88.5 million acre feet.

• The average acre feet applied was 1.6, which compares with 1.7 in the 2008 irrigation survey. (An acre foot is the volume of a sheet of water one acre in area and one foot in depth.)

• Irrigated area of horticulture under protection was 1.4 billion square feet in 2013. This compares with 1.37 billion square feet in 2008.

• Irrigated acres of horticulture grown in the open was 524 thousand acres in 2013. This compares with 580 thousand acres in 2008.

The 2013 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey followed up with 35,000 producers who indicated in the 2012 Census of Agriculture that they irrigate. To ensure the most accurate and complete results, NASS made an additional effort to include nursery and horticulture producers in the 2013 Irrigation Survey. Producers provided information on water sources and amount of water used, acres irrigated by type of system, irrigation and yield by crop, and system investments and energy costs.

"The results of the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey can be used to understand the use of improved technology, and lead to more efficient water use practices," said Reilly. "For farmers and ranchers who are looking for more efficient ways to irrigate their land and ways to reduce their expenses, the results of the survey will provide a valuable tool to help them make informed decisions about the future of their operations."

To access the results of the *2013 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey*, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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Viewpoint

Do Wars Really Defend America's Freedom?

Lawrence Wittner

U.S. politicians and pundits are fond of saying that America's wars have defended America's freedom. But the historical record doesn't bear out this contention. In fact, over the past century, U.S. wars have triggered major encroachments upon civil liberties.

Shortly after the United States entered World War I, seven states passed laws abridging freedom of speech and freedom of the press. In June 1917, they were joined by Congress, which passed the Espionage Act. This law granted the federal government the power to censor publications and ban them from the mail, and made the obstruction of the draft or of enlistment in the armed forces punishable by a hefty fine and up to 20 years' imprisonment. Thereafter, the U.S. government censored newspapers and magazines while conducting prosecutions of the war's critics, sending over 1,500 to prison with lengthy sentences. This included the prominent labor leader and Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs. Meanwhile, teachers were fired from the public schools and universities, elected state and federal legislators critical of the war were prevented from taking office, and religious pacifists who refused to carry weapons after they were drafted into the armed forces were forcibly clad in uniform, beaten, stabbed with bayonets, dragged by ropes around their necks, tortured and killed. It was the worst outbreak of government repression in U.S. history, and sparked the formation of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Although America's civil liberties record was much better during World War II, the nation's participation in that conflict did lead to serious infringements upon American freedoms. Probably the best known was the federal government's incarceration of 110,000 people of Japanese heritage in internment camps. Two-thirds of them were U.S. citizens, most of whom had been born (and many of whose parents had been born) in the United States. In 1988, recognizing the blatant unconstitutionality of the wartime internment, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act, which apologized for the action and paid reparations to the survivors and their families. But the war led to other violations of rights, as well, including the imprisonment of roughly 6,000 conscientious objectors and the confinement of some 12,000 others in Civilian Public Service camps. Congress also passed the Smith Act, which made the advocacy of the overthrow of the government a crime punishable by 20 years' imprisonment. As this legislation was used to prosecute and imprison members of groups that merely talked abstractly of revolution, the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately narrowed its scope considerably.

The civil liberties situation worsened considerably with the advent of the Cold War. In Congress, the House Un-American Activities Committee gathered files on over a million Americans whose loyalty it questioned and held contentious hearings designed to expose alleged subversives. Jumping into the act, Senator Joseph McCarthy began reckless, demagogic accusations of communism and treason, using his political power and, later, a Senate investigations subcommittee, to defame and intimidate. The president, for his part, established the Attorney General's List of "subversive" organizations, as well as a federal Loyalty Program, which dismissed thousands of U.S. public servants from their jobs. The compulsory signing of loyalty oaths became standard practice on the federal, state and local level. By 1952, 30 states required some sort of loyalty oath for teachers. Although this effort to root out "un-Americans" never resulted in the discovery of a single spy or saboteur, it did play havoc with people's lives and cast a pall of fear over the nation.

When citizen activism bubbled up in the form of protest against the Vietnam War, the federal government responded with a stepped-up program of repression. J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI director, had been expanding his agency's power ever since World War I, and swung into action with his COINTELPRO program. Designed to expose, disrupt, and neutralize the new wave of activism by any means necessary, COINTELPRO spread false, derogatory information about dissident leaders and organizations, created conflicts among their leaders and members, and resorted to burglary and violence. It targeted nearly all social change movements, including the peace movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement and the environmental movement. The FBI's files bulged with information on millions of Americans it viewed as national enemies or potential enemies, and it placed many of them under surveillance, including writers, teachers, activists and U.S. senators Convinced that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a dangerous subversive, Hoover made numerous efforts to destroy him, including encouraging him to commit suicide.

Although revelations about the unsavory activities of U.S. intelligence agencies led to curbs on them in the 1970s, subsequent wars encouraged a new surge of police state measures. In 1981, the FBI opened an investigation of individuals and groups opposing President Reagan's military intervention in Central America. It utilized informers at political meetings, break-ins at churches, members' homes and organizational offices, and surveillance of hundreds of peace demonstrations. Among the targeted groups were the National Council of Churches, the United Auto Workers and the Maryknoll Sisters of the Roman Catholic Church. After the beginning of the Global War on Terror, the remaining checks on U.S. intelligence agencies were swept aside. The Patriot Act provided the government with sweeping power to spy on individuals, in some cases without any suspicion of wrongdoing, while the National Security Agency collected all Americans' phone and internet communications.

The problem here lies not in some unique flaw of the United States but, rather, in the fact that warfare is not conducive to freedom. Amid the heightened fear and inflamed nationalism that accompany war, governments and many of their citizens regard dissent as akin to treason. In these circumstances, "national security" usually trumps liberty. As the journalist Randolph Bourne remarked during World War I: "War is the health of the state." Americans who cherish freedom should keep this in mind.

Lawrence Wittner (http://lawrenceswittner.com), syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor of History emeritus at SUNY/Albany.

ISIS, Ebola, Ferguson (Nukes?)

Patrick. T. Hiller, Ph.D.

Did you notice? Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel just announced plans to massively "upgrade" the U.S. nuclear arsenal. It might have been swallowed by other breaking and ongoing news: ISIS and another beheading, Ebola, Ferguson or the historic comet landing of Philae – at least one positive story. In addition to local news, stories in my own community of Hood River, Oregon include the transport of coal and construction of coal terminals, blast zone determination for oil trains, or the legacy of the Hanford nuclear production complex, which was part of the Manhattan Project.

Those unique or ongoing events certainly have their place in the news cycle and matter to us at different levels. Does that mean that we should numbly accept new plans by our government to revitalize systems that without doubt are the greatest threat to human survival? Did we forget that our President told the world in Prague in 2009 that America is committed to seek peace and security by creating a world without nuclear weapons, and for that announced intention received a Nobel Peace Prize?

The concerns outlined by Secretary Hagel could have provided an excellent opportunity to significantly implement the needed steps away from nuclear weapons. Cheating scandals on qualification tests or misconduct by top officers overseeing key nuclear programs certainly are worrisome. Even more worrisome is the fact that nuclear weapons still exist and are not considered an abnormality. The more troubling aspect of Hagel's announcement is the broader nuclear modernization program. Making sure the so-called triad of strategic deliver systems grows, the Pentagon can plan for plenty of new missile submarines, new bombers and new and refurbished land-based missiles. The Monterey Institute of International Studies sums up their well-documented report: "Over the next thirty years, the United States plans to spend approximately $1 trillion maintaining the current arsenal, buying replacement systems, and upgrading existing nuclear bombs and warheads."

Even the most doubtful among us will see the contradiction between the commitment of seeking a world without nuclear weapons and "revamping the nuclear enterprise" as Hagel noted in his keynote speech at the Reagan National Defense Forum last week.

It appears that the absence of the Cold War and the soothing rhetoric about a world without nuclear weapons keeps us complacent--or can anyone imagine one million people demonstrating against nuclear weapons as they did in New York City in 1982? That same year was the largest exercise in direct democracy (voting on an issue rather than representatives to decide 'our' view) when voters in referenda in about half the states decided overwhelmingly to call for a freeze on research, development, production and deployment of nuclear weapons. I think we the people should make ourselves heard again. Conflict transformation experts help us articulate many, some of them are:

First, nuclear deterrence is a myth and ought to be rejected by all people and governments. In the Santa Barbara Declaration by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the major problems outlined with nuclear deterrence are: (1) its power to protect is a dangerous fabrication; (2) the assumption of rational leaders;

(3) the threatening of mass murder is illegal and criminal; (4) it is immoral; (5) it diverts badly needed human and economic resources; (6) its ineffectiveness against non-state extremists; (7) its vulnerability to cyber-attacks, sabotage and error; and (8) setting an example to pursue nuclear weapons as deterrence.

Second, diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. Once the "unthinkable" nuclear option no longer plays a central role in security planning, and once the nuclear weapons are de-coupled from conventional military forces, the elimination of nuclear arsenals can be facilitated.

Third, don't wait for conditions to be ripe. There is statistical certainty that a nuclear weapon will be used at some point. The only way to make sure it does not happen is to eliminate all.

Fourth, encourage compliance with all international treaties and create new ones that will ban and eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide. We are at a time in history where a Global Peace System created conditions for global collaboration through international laws and treaties. It is time for the United States to meaningfully participate in this system.

Fifth, move our government toward unilateral disarmament. Without a nuclear arsenal we are not making anyone less secure. What if the United States would take the lead in a global "disarmament race"? After decades of international military interventionism the United States might become a loved and respected country again.

Sixth, recognize the role of nuclear weapons in the chain of global violence ranging from handguns on the streets of Chicago to catastrophic environmental and humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. Violence and the threat of violence on all levels perpetuates violence.

No Russian takeover of the Ukraine, Chinese territorial claims or even Pakistani expansion of nuclear arsenal makes it any more logical to revitalize our nuclear arsenals. We can reject the myth of nuclear deterrence and we can help the government shift the spending priorities to healthcare, education, infrastructure, the environment, renewable energy, low income housing and many more important areas. Currently our public conscience is lacking urgency with regard to nuclear weapons. We owe it to ourselves and our children to activate this urgency and make the elimination of nuclear weapons a step toward a world beyond war.

Patrick. T. Hiller, Ph.D., Hood River, OR, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a conflict transformation scholar, professor, on the Governing Council of the International Peace Research Association, and director of the War Prevention Initiative of the Jubitz Family Foundation.

Send us your Letters to the Editor

By mail: 208 W. Main, Ste. E, Visalia, CA 93291

By email: editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

Columns & Letters

Letter: Mathis Must Deliver

As ballots began to be counted on Tues., Nov. 4 it was quickly becoming apparent that the voters would offer a surprise to the local political arena when they ultimately elected unknown political newcomer Devon Mathis of Visalia as their state representative over the establishment's heir-apparent for the State Assembly Rudy Mendoza.

Although there are still over 22,000 ballots to be counted a week later after the election, statistically speaking the margin between Mathis and Mendoza (55.2% to 44.8%) is too wide for a turn around in the results. Mendoza has conceded and graciously accepted the will of the voters.

Most—without examination—would claim there is no reason why Mendoza, the sitting Mayor of Woodlake, shouldn't be the Assembly member-elect. After all he was the hand picked candidate who was literally handed over the Assembly seat on a silver platter to him by his boss Congressman Devin Nunes and the person he was to replace Assembly member Connie Conway.

The morning after many were scratching there heads wondering, "What happened?" It wasn't money. Mathis was out fundraised $22,600 to Mendoza's $279,000. It wasn't support. Mendoza was endorsed by every major office holder in the assembly district and had the sprawling political network of Nunes and Conway behind him. It wasn't experience. Mendoza is an elected official; Mathis had never run for office.

So what gives?

Mathis and Mendoza, both Republicans, are on same page on many issues. If a Democratic candidate would have been in this race against any of the two it would have been a solidly secured Republican win as Nunes experienced on Tuesday.

However in a closer look into the race there were some differences between the two. Mendoza was the establishment candidate, Mathis wasn't. Mendoza quit his job as a congressional staffer to run for office while Mathis is an advocate for veterans and a veteran himself. Mendoza is a Latino and Mathis is white.

The demographic profile of Tuesday's election was overwhelmingly white voters, leaning Republican. Of those Republican voters they gave Mendoza the edge however not enough to put him over. A reasonably large number of that particular base felt comfortable enough to vote with Democrats to elect Mathis into state office.

For the general Democratic voter Mathis was the clear alternative over Mendoza. Nunes and Conway actually helped Mathis gain Democratic support with the massive political mailings showing Nunes, Conway and Mendoza sitting at the table obviously supporting Mendoza's campaign. Then there were those Nunes and Mendoza political road signs posted literally next to each other throughout the district which also signified, to Democrats, that Mendoza was more "Republican" than Mathis.

For Latinos, who largely stayed home locally and nation-wide, Mendoza's election would have been important locally even if just symbolically. Latinos would have worked hard to get him elected, but he didn't reach out to Latinos and his positions were not supportive of Latino concerns or issues. At the end there was no enthusiasm in getting him elected.

Mendoza was also a participant of the Republican Party's "Grow Elect" program which financially backed Latino candidates in their effort to rebuild their party which has been losing voters statewide. However it's a tough sell to Latinos when a Latino candidate doesn't stand firm on issues important to their particular base.

Then there was the candidate. Mathis was not only a veteran, but a veterans' advocate. His message was also more politically inclusive than Mendoza's during the primary and that continued into the general election cycle. Mendoza made an attempt to center his message after the primary but it was too late.

Mathis campaigned that he would work for the district and put politics aside and if necessary reach across the aisle to Democrats to get things done. While Mendoza stressed the fact that the legislature would be controlled by a Democratic majority that anything he could propose would not get passed in the assembly, so instead he would focus on helping others like him get elected.

Bottom line is that this is one election where Democrats and Republicans came together to vote for someone outside the business as usual political establishment for a candidate who declared early during the primary that he would work for us in Sacramento and put people over politics.

The hope is that Assemblyman-elect Mathis holds true to his pledge.

Ruben Macareno is a central California political organizer and consultant.

"Well done MR Duran you might want to check out the other club house too Fraternal Order of Eagles"

— ***alex station*** *on* ***Letter: Concern Over Porterville Police***

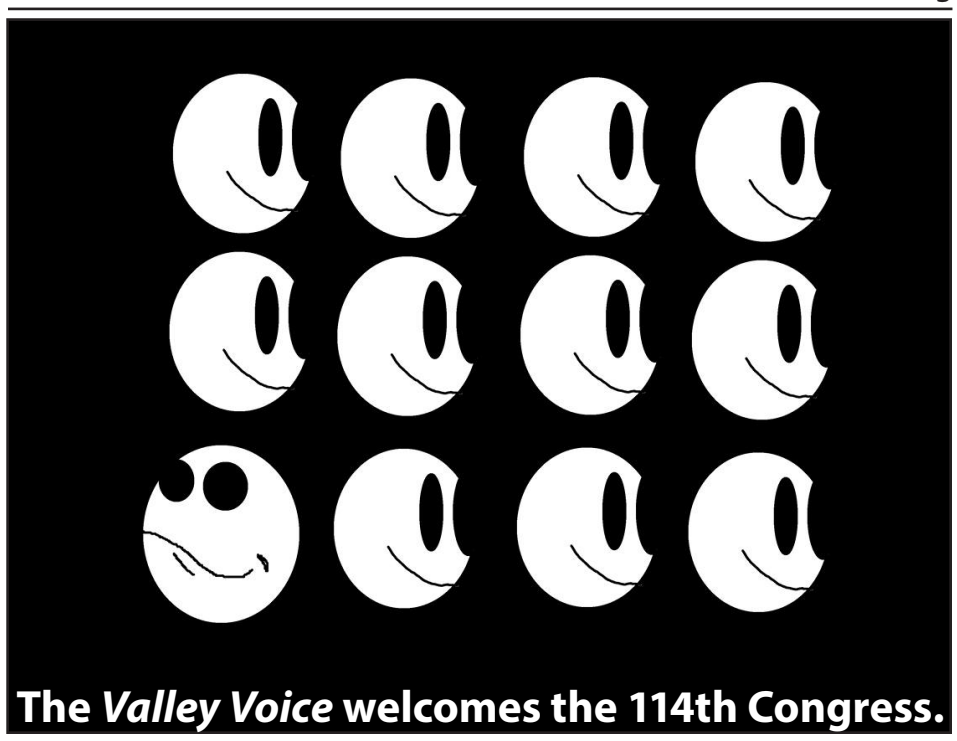
Letter: Hold Authority Accountable

Mr. Station: In accordance to my understanding the Fraternal Order of Eagles is not a "law" establishing entity of government and I withhold reservation to address their standing in the community. I personally don't have interest in what independ organizations, groups, committees, etc. contribute to the community because they don't act at the expense of the taxpayers. My question is that of the practices of the Porterville Police Department under the command of "chuck mcmillian" and the city's ignorance, which involves the Porterville City Manager and the Porterville City Counsel in failure to act in the best interest of the people. I trust the beliefs of Tulare District Attorney TIM WARD, when he proclaimed that,"no one is about the law" and that if anyone was to commit a crime, regardless of status, that he was compelled by law to prosecute. If a person in the position of authority, such as the soon to be retired chuck mcmillian, is allowed to depart his position under the allegations of a corruptive form of government which affects the entire community is certainly something that warrants a meaningful investigation and as public servant the city manager is obligated to provide answers to the people that pay his salary. It is further the obligation of the City Counsel to act with the same interest. In a recent article in the Porterville Recorder Councilwomen, Madam Gurrola, said that the Madam "who was on the council when the AG's opinion was sought, said she wants council to discusss the opinion if for no other reason was that to inform new members of the council of the potential for conflicts and further stating that she also wanted to see if the statue of limitations has passed if the council would want to pursue legal action against former Councilman Greg Shelton's regarding the purchase of property within redevelopment guidelines. My question to the Madam, is that of who has done more damage to the community and is subject to be held accountable?, chuch mcmillian, which allegations of having alcohol parties at the "Porterville Police Clubhouse" at taxpayer expense, which have been confirmed by the new Mayor milt stowe following the latest "Morning Coffee" gathering or the nonfounded allegations against former Councilman Greg Shelton. The damage has been inflicted against the will of the people and it is the responsiblity of the sitting council to fix it. The community did not elect or approved the exsisting panel to indulge in the practice of igornance, but rather the course of representing the people. If the City Manager is incapable of doing his job or the current City Council is incapable of excersicing it's authority, than it is time for them to leave. I would recommend that they take the overpaid City Attorney Julia Lew with them. Julia Lew drafted all the Measures on the Ballot for the June 2nd Election which cost the taxpayers over $50,000.00. The Measure were so confusing that I don't even think she, herself understood them. No harm intended, just being honest.

John Duran

Black Tie

Alex Oldenbourg



Veteran's Corner

Death Benefits

Joe Wright

When a veteran dies, the surviving spouse, children and parents may be eligible for benefits from the Veterans Administration. Family members may be eligible for one or more benefits based upon the circumstances of the death of the veteran. The Veterans Administration may provide Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC). This is a monetary benefit that is tax-free and is not income-based for a spouse or children. It is also available for parents but is income-based. DIC may be paid to the surviving spouse, children or parents of a service member who was killed on Active Duty, or for a veteran who died from a service-connected disability.

A Death Pension is available as an income supplement for a low-income surviving spouse and/or children of a veteran. The veteran must have served during a wartime period, and income and net worth must be within specified limits.

Burial benefits include--at no charge--a headstone, a burial flag, as well as a Presidential letter of recognition of the veteran's service. Burial Allowance monies are available to off-set the cost of the burial. Burial Allowance can be paid for a veteran who died from a service-connected disability or was in receipt of VA compensation at the time of death.

Finally under the Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA) Program, both the surviving spouse and children may be entitled to education and training opportunities. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. The veteran must have died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd., Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Tulare County Students Score High on Survey

Staff Reports

According to a recent statewide survey, Tulare County students who are receiving nutrition education lessons are getting the message and making positive food and physical activity choices. The Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention (NEOP) program, which was formerly known as the Network for a Healthy California, implemented its Harvest of the Month (HOTM) curriculum in seven third-grade classrooms during the 2013-14 school year.

To evaluate the program, students were administered a survey before the first lesson and again after the ninth and final session. Four classrooms not receiving the HOTM curriculum were also surveyed. While the results from the non-HOTM schools remained consistent in the pre and post-surveys, the results from the schools receiving the curriculum were remarkable. In every category--outdoor activity, consumption of soft drinks, healthy beverages (water and milk) and fruits and veggies--students in the HOTM classrooms reported dramatic positive increases.

The HOTM curriculum is designed to educate students about nutrition and introduce them to new foods they may not otherwise have the opportunity to try, with an emphasis on fresh local produce. Teachers were given monthly HOTM resource packets to conduct 30-to-45-minute presentations. The handouts showcased a different fruit or vegetable each month and included nutrient facts and recipe ideas. Tasting is the highlight of the sessions and students often discovered they liked something they had never tried before.

Third-grade Tulare County students who received Harvest of the Month (HOTM) curriculum in their classrooms report that they eat more fruits and vegetables, drink less soda, and participate in more physical activity than students who did not receive the HOTM lessons.

To aid in the delivery of HOTM curriculum for the 2014-15 school, dietician Alex Shew has joined the NEOP program. Shew is a recent graduate of Chico State and a former intern at the university's Center of Nutrition and Activities Promotion, where she worked with students in Butte County's after school program. She also interned at Sherwood Montessori School's kitchen garden program, working with kindergarten students to plant, pick and cook foods from the garden.

To view the Tulare County results of the recent NEOP survey, visit www.tcoe.org/Nutrition/HOTMsurvey.

Students Provide Evidence that CHARACTER COUNTS! in Tulare County

October is the month that schools across the nation celebrate CHARACTER COUNTS! and the good character students display on a daily basis. In Tulare County, which hosts one of the nation's largest celebrations, the month culminates with the presentation of the Provident-Salierno Family Foundation Awards. On October 26 and 28, family members gathered to celebrate 68 top students as they received special recognition.

For the third consecutive year, the Tulare County CHARACTER COUNTS! office reviewed Kids of Character nominations received from schools and citizens throughout the county to select the honorees and finalists for each of the Pillars of Character – Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. This year, the office received more than 6,500 student nominations from 143 Tulare County schools. At the awards celebration, the honorees and finalists for each pillar were given cash awards presented by Tony and Mary Salierno on behalf of the foundation they created.

"There are great stories of student character all around us," said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "After 19 years of holding Tulare County CHARACTER COUNTS! Week celebrations, it's wonderful to see the quality and effort teachers and community members put into recognizing Kids of Character. It just keeps getting better and better."

The student honorees ranged from elementary school students who demonstrated responsibility in the extra duties they perform on campus to the entire Redwood freshman football team, who created a video to support a rival Mt. Whitney High School player who is battling cancer.

Young Chloe Quintana was one of the honorees. She was recognized for the helpful, kind and generous attention she pays to a special needs boy named Ryan Valdez. Chloe and Ryan attend Cutler Elementary and have known each other for four years.

"Throughout this time, they have sometimes been in the same classroom and, if not, Chloe is sure to find him on the playground," said Ryan's mother, Melissa Valdez. "She meets him at the gate each morning and she makes sure Ryan is included at recess and that other kids are kind and respectful to him." For her willingness to accept people for their differences and for treating them with dignity and respect, Chloe was selected as the top honoree for the Pillar of Respect.

In the category of Caring, Porterville High School freshman Shawnee James was honored as a finalist. Her teacher, Vanessa Reilly of Alta Vista, shared that over the last five years, Shawnee has dedicated all her free time during break, lunch and PE to assisting fellow student Adriana Aleman who was afflicted with meningitis as a kindergarten student.

"She never made Adriana feel like she was disabled," Reilly said. "Shawnee was there to lean on in case Adriana needed help, not as a crutch, but for support. She never asked for anything but gained a best friend in the process. To give of oneself and not ask for anything in return is usually not a characteristic of a middle school or high school student. She is a truly caring individual."

For a complete list of Provident-Salierno Family Foundation honorees, visit www.tcoe.org/KidsofCharacter.

Valley Voice
Valley Holidays

Quick Tips for Hassle-Free Holiday Shopping

Looking to take the stress out of your holiday shopping this season?

Planning ahead and taking steps to protect yourself and your purchases can relieve a lot of shopping-induced stress, according to Jeff Unterreiner, a senior vice president with Assurant Solutions, a specialty insurance provider.

"While it's easy to get overwhelmed by holiday shopping, the good news is that it only takes a few basic steps to make the process easier on your pocketbook and your peace of mind," said Unterreiner.

Unterreiner offered these tips to help ensure your shopping this Christmas season is hassle-free:

- **Budget Planning:** The easiest way to overspend is to approach your shopping without a budget. Determine ahead of time what you can afford to spend overall, and make sure the gifts on your list fit within your means. A smart strategy is to leave yourself a little padding to accommodate potential budget-busting treasures you discover along the way.
- **Shop Early:** Start your shopping well ahead of Christmas to spare yourself the headache of unending lines and sold out shelves. Doing so can also help you save money. Starting earlier will give you more time to look for sales and promotions. When it comes to larger purchases, be sure you know the return policy and keep an eye on sales even after you buy. If the item is offered for a lower price within a certain timeframe, you may be able to get the difference refunded.
- **Reward Programs:** Take advantage of the many reward cards and incentive programs that let you earn cash back, goods and discounts. The holiday season is a great time to sign up, as many retailers offer bonus programs and extra perks for shoppers. In some cases those rewards can be used immediately to trim your shopping budget or find something nice for yourself as a reward for being a savvy shopper.

The holiday season is the best time of year to boost the local ecoomy by supporting community businesses.

- **Protect Purchases:** Many of the most-wanted gifts this season, like electronics and jewelry, are also the easiest to break or lose. Ensure your gifts keep giving long into the future by protecting your purchases with extended service plans that offer a range of protection from things like mechanical breakdown, accidental damage, loss and theft, as well as services such as tech support – and that can last long after the manufacturer's warranty expires.

- **Beat Fraud:** The frenzy of the Christmas season can make you vulnerable to theft. Be sure you're using a debit or credit card that offers protection in the event of unauthorized purchases. If you don't already, now is also an ideal time to pay closer attention to your transaction log so you can quickly address any unfamiliar charges.

3 P's of Smart Shopping

- **Plan:** A smart shopping plan begins with a budget. Decide what you're willing to spend on all holiday-related items, including travel, decorations and holiday meals. A budget will keep you disciplined and ensure you have enough money to pay your bills come January.
- **Purchase:** Focus your gift giving on what the person will like the most, not on the amount you think you should spend on that person. The best gift might not be the most expensive one; it's truly the thought that counts.
- **Protect:** The most wanted gifts this season – electronics and jewelry – also are the most vulnerable to breakage and theft. Including an extended protection plan will ensure your gift keeps on giving for a long time to come.
- **Shop Local:** The holiday season is the best time of year to boost the local ecoomy by supporting community businesses.

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'Mensch on a Bench' Hits Retailers

What started as a small Kickstarter campaign based on the insight of a five-year-old Jewish child is about to become one of the "must-have" gifts for Jewish and interfaith families this holiday season.

Sold out last Hanukkah in just 10 days, "The Mensch on a Bench," the brainchild of former toy marketing executive turned entrepreneur, Neal Hoffman will be available at retailers such as Target, Bed Bath and Beyond, Michaels, Barnes & Noble and Toys"R"Us this year.

"The Mensch on a Bench" offers a new Hanukkah tradition.

The Mensch on a Bench doll and accompanying book introduce children to the story and traditions of Hanukkah, while emphasizing the fine characteristics of a Mensch – a good and honorable person.

The Mensch on a Bench is a 12" plush doll with an accompanying hardcover storybook that explains Hanukkah from the view of "Moshe" the Mensch, who was in the temple when Judah and the Maccabees won an important war. With only enough oil for one night, Moshe volunteered to watch over the Menorah while everyone else was sleeping. The Mensch on a Bench doll holds the Shammash (leader) candle and is "magically" moved during each of the eight nights of Hanukkah to watch over the Menorah.

"I'm thrilled with the reaction from the Kickstarter community, Jewish community, and now, from mass merchants as well," Hoffman said. "Equally satisfying is the joy that our family has experienced with The Mensch on a Bench, along with the letters, tweets and Facebook posts we have received from other Jewish and interfaith families. For me and my family, this is such a fun and fulfilling ride."

For this Hanukkah, Hoffman added new pages to The Mensch on a Bench book to teach children the Hanukkah prayers and how to play dreidel. There is also a page for children to write down their favorite holiday season memories and allow them to start an annual tradition.

Deck the Halls with an Ugly Sweater Party

The holiday season is all about making fun memories. Why not wear something no one will soon forget at your own ugly sweater party?

Hosting one is simple -- have everyone show up in the tackiest holiday apparel they can find, whether from their closet, at a thrift store or something they "blinged" on their own.

With the party attire planned, try these easy and ugly dessert ideas from Wilton:

- Soft, sweet and so ugly cakes: If your guests' apparel doesn't grab attention, your cake sure will. Use an Ugly Sweater Cake Pan (available at Amazon and other retailers) to bake the cake. Style the decorating after your own garment -- use buttercream or fondant, holiday-shaped sprinkles and icing decorations to add some ugly to your cake.

An Ugly Holiday Sweater Cake can make your party a memorable one.

Peppermint Hot Chocolate Ugly Sweater Cake

Servings: 10-12

1 package (16.25 ounces) devil's food cake mix
1/4 cup hot cocoa mix
3 eggs
2/3 cup water
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
buttercream icing
red decorator preferred rolled fondant
white decorator preferred rolled fondant
primary colored fondant multipack
piping gel
string licorice
sprinkles: sugar pearls, trees, yellow colored sugar

Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray ugly sweater cake pan with vegetable pan spray.

In large bowl, beat cake mix, hot cocoa mix, eggs, water, vegetable oil and peppermint extract with electric mixer at low speed 30 seconds. Scrape bottom and sides of bowl; beat at medium speed 2 minutes.

Pour batter into prepared pan, spreading to even thickness. Bake 44-47 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center of cake comes out clean. Cool in pan on cooling grid 10 minutes. Remove from pan; cool completely on grid.

With spatula, lightly ice cooled cake. Roll out red fondant 1/8 inch thick; cover cake. Knead small amount of white fondant into remaining red fondant, white with small amount of yellow fondant, small amount of yellow fondant with green fondant. Roll out all colors of fondant separately, 1/16 inch thick. Using holiday cutters, patterns or cut free-form, to make collar, ornaments and sweater neckline, cuffs and bottom band. Use piping gel to attach licorice ornament hangers, sprinkles and sugars.

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The $100,000 Christmas Cycling Challenge

Amputee cyclist Helgard Muller

Amputee cyclist Helgard Muller will fulfill his American Dream of motivating and inspiring others by cycling 3,045 miles on a road bike (and his mountain bike for the rough terrain) across the United States. He aims to raise $100,000 for people with disabilities.

To his knowledge, he will be the first person with only one leg to do a Christmas Cycling Challenge. He kicks off from Los Angeles, when he sets course for Ground Zero - New York City; he will be wearing his "Riders For Hope" golf-shirt and cap, thereby raising awareness for persons with disabilities.

"I hope to raise awareness and funds for the Riders For Hope Christmas Cycling Challenge campaign," said Helgard. "I am riding to inspire communities all over the country to support Riders For Hope's efforts to assist the many people with physical and mental disabilities who can't afford to buy the appropriate equipment for their needs."

Muller had his foot amputated after an agricultural accident in Roscoe, South Dakota in 2007.

"The road to recovery was a long and painful process, and all I could focus on was seeing the things that I loved doing – being active, enjoying the outdoors and travelling – disappearing from my life," he said.

Muller has already had several different prostheses, each of which cost about $10,000. "Assistive devices for persons with disabilities cost a small fortune and I want Americans to be aware of the issues that face persons with disabilities. Furthermore, I look to helping those in need by procuring funds to help in the purchase of these items."

He will head northeast from California to New York, travelling through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania, which will take him to Ground Zero in New York City.

He believes the trip will take between six weeks and two months. His wife, Hanlie, is cycling along, and other friends will be joining along for the adventure and to drive the support vehicle. They will keep their fans updated daily at www.helgardmuller.com (or click through to his Facebook page).

"I will be spreading my message of hope along the way, and encouraging other amputees, actually anyone, to believe in themselves that they can do anything if they set their mind to it," said Muller. "No matter how big the challenge or what your history is, you can change your situation by doing something big to motivate yourself while inspiring others."

For more information, visit www.ridersforhope.org.

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Another Close Shave

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the manse
not a creature was stirring, not even the ants.
Instructions were spread on the floor in Chinese,
in hopes that assembly would happen with ease.

The presents were piled by the tree in a heap,
each one to be wrapped while the kids were asleep.
And mamma on the sofa, and I on my duff,
had been at it for hours and just called, "Enough!"

When out from the kitchen there glided our daughter,
who'd silently risen for a glass of water.
Away to her side stiff of limb I did trundle,
and put her to bed, all safe in a bundle.

The house like the moon in the night now fell quiet
as monks uncomplaining while on a strict diet;
when, what to my wondering ears should I hear,
but the sound of mamma cracking open a beer,

who burped after taking the tiniest sip,
with a come-hither look and a hand on her hip.

With only crow's feet and some laugh-lines to date her,
we kissed by the light of the refrigerator:

"Here's to you! Here's to me! Here's to all of our kids!"
Then she giggled at me and winked with both lids!
On top of the counter she sat on her bottom,
recalling the children, and how we got 'em.

As dry as my throat was I nodded my head,
and we sped, hand-in-hand, up the stairs to our bed,
when, from a tree came the cry of our feline,
I made to the window the speediest beeline.

I tore open shutters, and threw up the sash,
to find Mr. Whiskers eschewing his stash.
Far out on a branch he had dragged, like some leopard,
one leg of our turkey, although it was peppered;

his fur was disheveled beyond any measure,
and he grinned at me like the more famous Cheshire:
but the look I mistook for self-satisfaction,
became in the moonlight a need of extraction.

He was caught by a forepaw in the smallest crook,
and I could tell he was stuck with no second look.
His eyes, how they darted! How he struggled and howled!

And mamma stood behind me, shook her head, and scowled.

"That miserable cat," she said, "I just fed him!
Don't stand there staring, Murphy. Damn it, go get him!"
Far into the night I leaned forward, reaching
for Mr. Whiskers, who now sat beseeching,

when two things occurred at one time, if you will:
I fell out, while he leapt in safe, over the sill.
Below, I was sprawled on my back on the fescue.
Now who, let me ask you, needed a rescue?

Aghast, I regarded the twinkling night stars,
hearing only the wind and the passing of cars,
and for a split-second I thought I was dead;
until, I remembered, the pain in my head.

And if not for the snow that lay hither and yon,
I'd have hit the doctor's after hitting the lawn.
In the end, of course, Mr. Whiskers was saved;
myself, so was I-- 'twas another close shave.

— Murphy

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Christmas Parades Kick Off Holiday Season

Candy Cane Lane Parade in Visalia

Downtown Visalia's 69th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade, set for 7-9pm on Monday, December 1, will kick off the holiday season in Visalia.

The parade will run along Main Street from Liberty to Conyer, and be held rain or shine. A crowd of 30,000 is expected to line the parade route at this annual event.

This year's theme is "Christmas in Toyland," and the parade will be led by Grand Marshal Marilyn Barr, escorted by the Goshen Mounted Police, and feature Santa Claus arriving in his carriage.

ABC-30 Action News Team will announce the parade and tape it for rebroadcast. For more information, visit downtownvisalia.com.

LEMOORE CHRISTMAS PARADE featured on **19 »**

Hanford Christmas Parade

The Hanford Christmas Parade, which will begin at 6pm on November 28 in Downtown Hanford, will officially welcome Santa Claus.

According to the Hanford Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Claus will board Amtrak in Fresno on train 712 at 11:35am that day, arriving in Hanford at 12:11pm. He will then ride "Freddy the Fire Truck" to the Hanford Civic Auditorium to watch the movie "Frozen." (Admission is two canned food items per person.)

Mr. Claus will then make his annual appearance in the Hanford Christmas Parade.

The Hanford Chamber of Commerce, the City of Hanford, *Hanford Sentinel* and Family Health Care Network sponsor the parade. For more information, call 582-0483 or visit handfordchristmas.org.

Porterville Children's Christmas Parade

The annual Porterville Children's Christmas parade will be held along Main Street, from Morton south to Olive, in downtown Porterville on Thursday, December 4, starting at 7pm. This year's parade theme is "A Christmas Wish List" and more than 90 entries will be featured.

A number of non-profit organizations will have food booths along Main Street, offering a variety of refreshments, and local restaurants will offer parade specials as well.

The annual parade is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Porterville, the Porterville Chamber of Commerce and the City of Porterville. For more information, call the chamber at 784-7502.

'Phantom of the Opera' Opens at L.J. Williams Theater in Visalia

This month, the Tulare County Office of Education's Theatre Company will present four public performances of "Phantom of the Opera." Students have been working this semester to prepare their production of the popular Andrew Lloyd Webber musical.

"Phantom of the Opera" is the story of a masked figure who lurks in the catacombs below the Paris Opera House, exercising a reign of terror over all who work in it. He falls madly in love with an innocent young soprano, Christine, and devotes himself to creating a new star by nurturing her extraordinary talents and by employing all of the devious methods at his command. The production features popular songs, including "Think of Me," "Angel of Music," "Music of the Night," "All I Ask of You," "Masquerade" and the title song, "Phantom of the Opera."

Cameron Haley plays the Phantom and Kaley McConnaughey plays Christine.

The Theatre Company will also perform preshow selections from Disney's "Frozen" on November 20, 21 and 22. The preshow evening performances will begin at 6:45pm at the L.J. Williams Theater in Downtown Visalia. A matinee show beginning at 1:45pm will also be offered on Saturday, November 22.

Tickets are available at two Visalia locations: Tulare County Office of Education, 2637 W. Burrel Ave., and Educational Resource Services, 7000 Doe Ave., Suite A. General admission tickets are $10 per person; reserved seating is $20 per person. Tickets will also be available at the theater box office prior to each performance.

The Phantom is played by Cameron Haley, Visalia Technical Early College High School; Christine Daae is played by Kaley McConnaughey, Redwood High School; Raoul is played by Jack O'Leary, Redwood High School; Monsieur Firman is played by Vincent Macareno, Redwood High School; Monsieur Andre is played by Braden Cox, Mission Oak High School; Madame Giry is played by Lindsey Weeks, Redwood High School; Carlotta is played by Megan Forgey, home school; Piangi is played by Cameron Forgey, home school; and Meg Giry is played by Carly Caviglia, Golden West High School.

For more information, call 651-1482.

Tickets on Sale for 'Babes in Toyland,' the 34th Annual Christmas Tree Auction

"Babes in Toyland," the 34th Annual Christmas Tree Auction, is set to kick off Friday, December 12, at the Visalia Convention Center. Hosted by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, the Christmas Tree Auction is the only formal event open to the public in the city.

The live tree auction will be emceed by Amy Shuklian and Flint Epps. Attendees will dance the night away while enjoying wine tasting and delicious hors d'oeuvres from local restaurants and wineries. In additional to the live tree auction, there will be a silent auction also benefitting local charities.

Returning this year is the Groppetti Automotive Family Giving Tree. One lucky person will have the opportunity to bring home a beautifully decorated tree loaded with gift cards. Proceeds from the Giving Tree will be donated to the winner's charity of choice.

Local charities are decorating 16 live Christmas trees to be auctioned off, in addition to silent auction items benefitting: CASA of Tulare County, Community Educational Broadcasting, Daughters of Hope, El Diamante High School, Family Services of Tulare County, Golden State Family Services, Habitat for Humanity, International Agri-Center, Kaweah Delta Foundation LifeLine, Kaweah Delta Hospice Foundation, Kaweah Delta Foundation Private Home Care, Love In the Name of Christ, Mt. Whitney Jazz Band Boosters, NAMI, Redwood High School Mock Trial, Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Central Valley, Inc., St. Paul's Parent Guild, Samaritan Center Clinic, Sisterhood of Grace, Spirit 88.9, United Way of Tulare County, Valley Life Foundation, Visalia Education Foundation and Visalia Rescue Mission.

General admission tickets are $65 and include: wine tasting, hors d'oeuvres, silent auction, dessert and dancing. VIP tickets are $130 and include general admission benefits plus a formal sit-down dinner. VIP tickets will be accepted beginning at 5:30pm, with general admission beginning at 7:30pm. The festivities will conclude at 11:30pm.

Tickets may be purchased at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce: 220 N. Santa Fe St., by calling 734-5876 or by visiting www.visaliachamber.org. Special sponsorship opportunities are available for interested businesses.

Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar at Sequoia Union

A Craft Fair Christmas

Catherine Doe

All those holiday locavores who love craft fairs are in luck because happening almost every weekend until December 7 are some awesome events. The holiday craft fair season officially kicks off on the third Saturday in November with the Three Rivers Holiday Bazaar and the Women's Network Holiday Marketplace at the Visalia Convention Center. These are yearly events so mark your calendars now for next year.

Attending small town craft fairs shoppers can meet artisans who only sell their wares once a year at these venues. Such items as Native American jewelry, handmade ornaments, pomegranate jelly, crocheted baby outfits, quilts and hand-painted birdhouses are truly works of American folk art. You won't see two items that are exactly the same and they are not available online. For example, if you want Missy's English toffee, this treat is only available at the Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar and sells out before closing time. If the toffee makes it home, this edible keeps perfectly in the freezer and makes a great gift.

The Christmas Market Place at St Mary's Church in Visalia takes place right after Thanksgiving. The event is put on by the Catholic Women's Guild. The guild chose Sunday, November 30 because they figured everyone would be tired of the Black Friday chaos and ready for some personal shopping. Unlike the bigger events, this is a strictly handmade only craft fair.

The craft fair weekend of the year starts December 5 with four big events. Lemon Cove is host to two of these events, but the best night-time craft fair in Tulare County is The Naz Holiday Bazaar at 3333 W. Caldwell in Visalia. On Friday night, they throw a fantastic VIP event 6:30-8:30pm. For a measly $5 you get a constant stream of hors d'ouvres, door prizes every hour, silent auction, local musicians and great vendors including the church's secretary, who sells amazing detailed hand-painted ornaments that she will personalize for free. They will be open again Saturday, December 6 from 9am to 3pm.

The Lemon Cove Holiday Bazaar, put on by Sequoia Union's PTC, also starts on Friday and offers, new this year, a photo with Santa. Their hours are December 5 from 1-4pm, and Saturday, December 6 from 9am-4pm. Santa is very busy so he will only be there Friday afternoon. Besides local artisans selling soy candles, all-natural soaps and lotions, there will be jewelry, along with an assortment of beautiful holiday-inspired gifts. This is a family-friendly event with shopping and gourmet coffee and homebaked goodies for all. Take Highway 198 to Ave. 324 and follow the sign to Sequoia Union/Lemon Cove Memorial Building, 23958 Ave. 324.

A little further down, on the corner of Highway 198 and Avenue 324, is the Lemon Cove Woman's Club. This is a great opportunity to see inside one of Tulare County's historic treasures while getting into the holiday spirit. This beautiful turn-of-the-century home was built by an early pioneering family and was formally known as the Pogue Hotel. Their bazaar starts at 11am Saturday, December 6 with the sale of holiday items made by local women and club members. Lunch will be served at noon followed by a card party. Lunch tickets are $15. All proceeds go towards the preservation of this historic home. This year's goal is to raise enough money towards restoring the front porch of this 135-year-old home. For lunch reservations, call Mary Cloud at 597-1416.

Your locavore shopping weekend is not over because Exeter's Country Craft's Fair is Sunday, December 7 from 9am to 4pm. This will be their 45th annual craft fair, and it is also the largest, with over 67 venders from all over Tulare County. Proceeds from this event go to local veterans and active military men and women. Besides Exeter's Christmas tree auction the night before, this is Exeter's major holiday season event, so grab some pie and go shopping!

Reiki Classes Offered at Cosmic Corral

Livia Thompson is a reiki usui/holy fire master level practitioner currently offering treatments at the Cosmic Corral in Hanford, Thursdays from 10am to 4:00pm. She also offers Reiki classes on Fridays from 1pm to 4:00pm. Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and overall wellbeing.

Thompson has worked in the medical field for 14 years, and studied holistic medicine. She has a certificate in meditation and has taken mindfulness meditation classes at UCLA. She believes in the connection between mind and body, and the powerful effect that healing may have on the various interconnected systems (e.g. biological, spiritual, psychological).

Every treatment is individualized to the needs of the client, and she specializes in traditional usui reiki as well as usui holy fire reiki. Thompson is available by appointment at Cosmic Corral, 209 N. Irwin St. in Old Town Hanford. For more information, call 772-8140.

'Spirit of the Holidays' Features Wine Tasting and Auctions

"An Old Fashioned Christmas," the 23rd annual "Spirit of the Holidays," presented by the Exeter Kiwanis Club, will be held Saturday, December 6, from 4-7pm in the Exeter Memorial Building. The event features wine tasting, raffle items, a silent auction and a live Christmas tree auction.

This annual event showcases wines from Napa, Sonoma, Santa Barbara and the Central Coast. Several of the wines will be available as raffle items.

Trees decorated and donated by local businesses will be auctioned off at the event. The Kiwanis Club will also offer a wide variety items, including gifts for Christmas, in the silent auction.

All of the proceeds from the event will benefit the Exeter Kiwanis Club's Benevolent Fund, which completes community projects in Exeter. Past projects have included an electronic sign on the highway to announce local events, a mural commemorating local heroes who fought in World War II and a contribution toward the purchase of a new scoreboard for the Exeter Union High School Montgomery Aquatics Center.

The Exeter Memorial Building is located at 324 N. Kaweah Ave. on Highway 65 in Exeter. Tickets are $50. For more information or tickets, call the Exeter Chamber of Commerce at 592-2919, or visit www.exeterkiwanis.org.

Main Street Hanford Plans 14th Annual Wine & Chocolate Tasting

Changes are coming to the Main Street Hanford 14th Annual Wine & Chocolate Tasting. Ticket holders will start their tasting journey at a new location, Pro Travel Hanford at 300 W. Seventh St. on a new night, as this year's event will be held on Friday, December 5 from 6-9pm.

Participants will be able to enjoy one of life's most indulgent pairings at this premier wine and chocolate tasting. The evening will include 24 downtown businesses extending their hours and inviting everyone to get in the holiday spirit.

Event tickets are $30 in advance and $35 on the day of the event, and can be purchased at Main Street Hanford, Castaways Consignments, Fatte Albert's Pizza Co., Lush Fine Wines and Pro Travel Hanford. Tickets will be redeemed on the night of the event between 5:45-7pm for a Main Street Hanford wine glass and eight tasting tickets. A map of downtown will guide attendees to various businesses for a variety of fine wines and delectable chocolates.

An extensive list of special wines has been thoughtfully selected for the 14th year of this event, with 50 different wines to choose from, including Chronic Cellars Purple Paradise Zin, Tobin James Petite Sirah "Black Magic," Fifty Shades of Grey White Silk or perhaps a Soleil Mimosa Pomegranate.

Main Street Hanford has acquired 3,000 exquisite chocolates for this special event, including decadent delights from Sweet Shop, a family-owned producer of handmade chocolates, including Cup O' Cocoa truffles and Sea Salt Caramel truffles and Torn Ranch, with their tantalizing sweets such as Espresso Caramel truffles and 24K Gold truffles.

This event is limited to 1,000 people and sells out every year. For further information, call Main Street Hanford at 582-9457.

Tulare County Library Hosts 'War Comes Home' Events

The Tulare County Library is hosting events on November 20 and 22 to wrap-up the "War Comes Home" project featuring veterans and their concerns.

A Panel Discussion on Veterans' Issues will be held on Thursday, November 20, at 6pm. Representatives of the Employment Development Department (EDD), AMVETS and other community and government agencies will discuss employment opportunities and training, suicide prevention, local resources and benefits for veterans. The goal is to provide awareness and access to those affected so they can make use of the various resources already available in our community. Veterans, their families and friends are encouraged to attend.

A Veterans History Project presentation is scheduled for Saturday, November 22, at 6pm. The oral history event will show segments of interviews with local veterans conducted by the library's Teen Advisory Group. Each interview, in its entirety, will be sent to the Library of Congress as part of the Veteran's History Project, and a copy will be retained for the Annie Mitchell History Room in Visalia. The public is encouraged to attend and view the movie, meet some of the veterans and learn more about those who served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm.

War Comes Home programs have been held over the past three months as part of a Cal Humanities grant received by the library. Both the concluding events will be at the Tulare County Library Visalia branch at 200 W. Oak St. The public is welcome and no reservations are necessary. For more information, call 713-2703.

Kings Players Stage Children's Production of 'A Redneck Christmas Carol'

The Kings Players will present a children's production of "A Redneck Christmas Carol," a Dickens of a tale, written by Eugene Jackson and directed by Lindsey Surrat, and featuring a modern-day redneck Scrooge who lives in a single-wide trailer where he counts his money from his business running some stalls in a Florida flea market.

The Ghost of the Future (Ashton Mayberry) shows Scrooge (Ryan Kittrell) his own dead body.

It's the hottest Christmas Eve in the history of Florida and Scrooge tells his employees, Bobby "Bowlegs" Cratchit and Honeydew, that they will have to work on Christmas.

Old Joe (Andon Rubalcava) barters with Mr. Dilbert (Parker Buwalda) and Mr. Walkin (Chase Johnson) over Scrooge's things.

Later that evening, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past, who looks a lot like a redneck Santa Claus; the Ghost of Christmas Present, who resembles a redneck Christmas tree; and the Ghost of Christmas Future, the black sheet of the family. Then a group of zombies led by the Ghost of Jacob Marley arrive and Scrooge realizes that the only way to "git'em back to their dingy-dang graves" is to give them some Christmas presents. Scrooge invites his employees and the whole Cratchit family to the flea market to celebrate Christmas with a dinner of seafood gumbo and few redneck Christmas carols.

Performances will be at the Temple Theatre in Hanford on November 21-23, 29 and 30, and December 5-7 and 12-14. For tickets or more information, call 584-7241.

Local Musicians to Perform at November 29 Visalia Rescue Mission Fundraiser

Joel Adam Russell

Local musicians will bring their talents to the Cellar Door in Downtown Visalia on Saturday, November 29, for Home for the Holidays, a Visalia Rescue Mission fundraiser.

The 8pm show is headlined by Visalia's own Slow Season, who recently completed their new full-length release, *Mountains*, on Easy Rider Records. They play hypnotic, heavy and howling rock 'n' roll.

Visalia's Joel Adam Russell kicks off the night. His style is often classified as indie-pop-folk, with undertones of soul, Americana, and rhythm and blues. This concert will feature Russell backed by a full band.

Tickets for the 21+ show are $7.

Lemoore Christmas Parade Set for Dec. 6

The Lemoore Chamber of Commerce's Annual Christmas Parade is scheduled for 6pm Saturday, December 6, along D Street between Follett and Hill Streets in Downtown Lemoore.

The mission and goal of the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce and Committee is to present a successful, safe and entertaining Christmas Parade as a holiday gift to the citizens of Lemoore and all of Kings County. Entries are inspired by this year's theme, "A Frozen Valley Christmas."

For more information, call the Lemoore Chamber at 924-6401.

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Love Note

Love Note to Release New CD at December 6 Cellar Door Show

Steve Pastis

The Visalia-based duo Love Note will headline their CD release party at the Cellar Door in downtown Visalia on Saturday, December 6. Their self-titled CD was recorded at JCS Records and mastered at the new Wings of Silver Recording Studios, both in Visalia.

Trenton Babb and Danelle Evangelho met in middle school and stayed friends during their time at Golden West High School. Through the years, they have collaborated on diverse projects such as school plays, choir, photo shoots, a ukulele album, and now Love Note.

"We went to school together and we have a lot of history together," explained Babb, who described Love Note's music as "a pop jazz sound with a modern dance edge," adding that it often has a powerful female voice in songs like "Don't Wait Up."

The duo's sound was inspired by pop and ragtime jazz. They cite influences like Ray Charles, The Mamas and the Papas, Michael Jackson, The Civil Wars and The Cherry Poppin' Daddies.

"When we write songs together, we always have to find a catch phrase to build from," said Babb, noting that when they decided on the phrase "'rich quick,' we said, 'Let's put a sassy beat behind it.'"

The band also wrote and sings "a sweet wedding song told from the groom and bride's perspective," according to the description that accompanies the song at https://soundcloud.com/love-note-music/im-waiting.

"We wanted to write a wedding song," said Babb. "There's a market for a wedding song. We have played it at five weddings. People have told us, 'We want to walk down the aisle with your song.'"

A lot of people incorrectly assume that Babb and Evangelho are also a romantic couple. "We do give off that impression, but that's what the audience wants," said Babb.

Love Note is still an unsigned band, producing its own songs. "What we're hoping for is to get a band together, to get a full horn section, and go on the road," said Babb.

Both members of Love Note have talents beyond music. Babb is also a stand-up comedian, performing at Halfy's in Tulare. Evangelho is a photographer.

In 2013, Babb released *Trent Babb & His Babass Ukulele*, an album of all-original pop songs performed on the ukulele. He noted that Paul McCartney and George Harrison have each incorporated the instrument in some of their songs. "This was my outlet to include Beatles-style songwriting with a ukulele," he explained.

Sometime Yesterday, also based in Visalia, was invited by Love Note to kick off the 8pm show. The five-member indie rock group will be making its Cellar Door debut.

Tickets are $5 and available at Ticketweb.com.

NEXT DEADLINE: 26 NOVEMBER 2014

MUSIC

Nov. 20, 27 – South 65 Country Rock Band – 8pm-12:30am
South 65 will perform every Thursday night at the Republik Lounge & Nightclub, 115 N. Locust St., Visalia. For information, visit facebook.com/RepublikLoungeNightclub.

Nov. 21 – Karaoke – 6:30-8:30pm
Every Third Friday each month, Karaoke is featured at 210 Cafe. For information, call 739-9009.

Nov. 21 – Run4Cover – 9pm
Run4Cover will return to the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main Street, Visalia, for a 21+ concert. Tickets are $6. For information, visit cellardoor101.com.

Nov. 22 – The Grand Palooza – 6pm
Brain Damage, Zed Bonfire, Wasted Years and more will perform at London Music Hall, 185 Queens Ave., London. Tickets, $27.50, available at ticketfly.com. Must be over 19 years of age. For information, visit londonmusichall.com.

Nov. 22 – Final Chords – 7:30pm
The Tulare County Symphony Orchestra November concert features Tchaikovsky's last symphony and Elgar's final concerto. The event will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main St., Suite D, Visalia. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

Nov. 28 – Salsa Dance Lessons – 8-8:45pm
Free dance lessors are available with every $10 paid admission to salsa dancing featuring Rumba 32, a collection of local music educators and professionals in the Visalia and Fresno area, at 210 Cafe in Visalia. For information, call 739-9009.

Nov. 28 – Salsa Dance featuring Rumba 32 – 9-11pm
Salsa dancing featuring Rumba 32, a collection of local music educators and professionals in the Visalia and Fresno area, will be held at 210 Cafe in Visalia. Salsa dancing is offered on the fourth Friday of each month, except December. For information, call 739-9009.

Nov. 28 – Mezcal Turkey Hangover Party – 9:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Mescal at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St. Tickets for the 21+ concert are $10. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Nov. 29 – Home for the Holidays – 8-10pm
A Visalia Rescue Mission Fundraiser will feature concerts by Slow Season, Joel Adam Russell, and Let's Listen Blog DJ's at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets are $7 for this 21+ concert. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Dec. 2 – Good Medicine – 7pm
Good Medicine will perform at Brewbakers Pub in Visalia.

Dec. 6 – Tulare County Symphony Orchestra Annual Holiday Concert – 3 & 7:30pm
More than 200 performers from throughout the county showcase talent with music for all ages at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit Facebook.com/tcsymphony.

Dec. 6 – A Country Christmas – 7:30pm
Sonya Diane Jones performs at the Lindsay Community Theater, 190 N. Elmwood Ave. For information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com.

Dec. 6 – Love Note – 8pm
A CD Release Party for Love Note will be held at the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia Tickets are $5 for this 21+ concert. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Dec. 10, 17 & 24 – Open Mic Night – 7:30-9:30pm
Ronnie Nix will lead open mic night at Farmer's Fury Tasting Room, 358 W. D Street, Lemoore every Wednesday evening. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Dec. 11 – Crystal Gayle and Lee Greenwood Christmas Show – 7:30pm
Tickets are $35, $45 and $65 for this Christmas concert at the Tachi Palace Resort and Casino in Porterville. For information, visit at tachipalace.com.

Dec. 12 – The Tumbao Band – 9:30pm
Performing at the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets are $7 for this 21+ concert. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Dec. 13 – Sons of the San Joaquin – 3-5pm
The Western music trio will perform at the Visalia Fox Theater. Tickets, $19-$23, are available at foxvisalia.org.

Dec. 13 – Katy Moffatt – 7pm
Katy Moffat will perform at Mavericks Coffee House, 238 E. Caldwell Ave., Visalia. For information, visit mavericksccoffeehouse.com.

Dec. 14 – Jeremy "Elvis" Pearce – 3pm
Elvis Impersonator Jeremy Pearce will perform Christmas songs and more at The Barn Theater in Porterville. For information, visit barntheater.porterville.com.

Dec. 14 – Christmas Concert – 4 pm
Kings Symphony Orchestra brings back treasured memories of childhood and family in this holiday concert held at Hanford High Presentation Center. For information, visit kingssymphony.org.

Dec. 14-15 – Best of Colburn – 7pm
The Best of Colburn music series presents tuba player Gabriel Sears, who will premier a new work by resident composer Ken Elias. Presented twice: Dec. 14 at 7 pm at Community Presbyterian Church, 43410 Sierra Dr., Three Rivers; and Dec. 15 at 5 pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit threeriversperformingarts.org.

Dec. 18 – Tulare Community Band Winter Concert – 7:30pm
Holiday music, marches, concert music and a "Tribute to the Military" finale will be featured at a free concert at the Tulare Community Auditorium, 755 E. Tulare Ave. For information, call 901-3773.

Dec. 19 – The Chop Tops – 9:30pm
The Chop Tops, Motel Drive, DeeJay Savage Salvador perform the Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets are $10 for this 21+ concert. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Dec. 20 – TCSO Holiday Pops – 3 & 7:30pm
The Tulare County Symphony Orchestra will present its holiday show featuring Winter, Christmas and Hanukkah music.

EVENTS

Through Dec. 5 - Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Friends of Tulare County Toy Drive
Give a child a gift meant just for them by donating by Dec. 5. To sign up and view drop-off locations, visit tinyurl.com/kz7ts7d.

Nov. 20 – Young Professionals Series – 6-8pm
The Young Professionals Network Visalia will host Steve McDartha of True Legacy Consulting at Brandman University, 659 S. County Center. Reservations can be made by calling 734-5876.

Nov. 21 – Hanford Chamber Mixer – 5:30-7:30pm
In celebration of The Downtown East Precise Plan Award, the Hanford Chamber will hold a mixer at Old Kings County Courthouse. For information, call 582-0483.

Nov. 21 – 6th Annual Aquatini Shakedown – 6pm
California Water Alliance hosts local restaurants in a competition in creating the most coveted martini. In addition, there will be a live and silent auction along with music and food provided by the Vintage Press Restaurant. The event will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, visit californiawateralliance.org.

Nov. 24 – Lemoore Christmas Parade Entry Deadline
Lemoore Chamber of Commerce will accept applications for entry in the Christmas Parade until Nov. 24 at 300 E. Street. For information, call 924-6401.

Nov. 27 – Race Against Hunger – Visalia Turkey Trot – 7:30am
The 10th Annual Race Against Hunger presented by Visalia Emergency Aid Council will be held in Downtown Visalia at Garden and Main streets. Proceeds for the 5K run & 2 mile walk go to benefit the needy in the community. Registration and information available at veac.org.

Nov. 27 – Thanksgiving Community Dinner – 11am-3pm
Lemoore Senior Center will host a community dinner. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

Nov. 28 – Canned Food Movie Drive – 1-2pm
A food drive for the Hanford Salvation Army will be held at Hanford Civic Auditorium, 400 N. Douty St. Entry fee is 2 canned food items.

Nov. 28 – Hanford Christmas Parade – 6-7pm
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce, the City of Hanford, Hanford Sentinel and Family Health Care Network sponsor the Hanford Christmas Parade in downtown Hanford. For information, visit handfordchristmas.org.

Nov. 28-29 – Turkey Shootout
Rocky Hill Speedway and D&E Racing will present a 2-day racing event featuring modified, sports mods, CVT stocks, hobbies, American, Super 4's and minis and dwarfs at 2332 E. Olive Drive, Porterville. Advance tickets are $55. For information, call 359-6887.

Nov. 29 – Small Business Saturday
Exeter Chamber of Commerce reminds everyone that Saturday is National Small Business Saturday and encourages people to buy local in support of local businesses. For information, visit exeterchamber.com.

Nov. 29 – Salvation Army Angel Tree
The Salvation Army will host an Angel Tree at the Tulare Public Library for toy donations via the Friends of the Tulare Public Library and the Tulare Library Foundation. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Nov. 30 – Lemoore Volunteer Fire Department Tree Raising – 11am-4pm
A community food drive, kids zone, Santa and the tree raising ceremony will be held at the intersection of Fox and D Streets in Lemoore.

Dec. 1 – 69th Annual Candy Cane Lane Parade – 7-9pm
Downtown Visalia will host the parade featuring 100 floats and other entries along Main Street between Liberty and Conyer. Marilyn Barr will be the Grand Marshall. ABC-30 Action News will film the parade for rebroadcast.

Dec. 1 – Lemoore Chamber Awards Nomination Deadline
The deadline to submit nominations for Lemoore's 2015 outstanding citizen, business or organization of the year is Dec 1. Submit forms to 300 "E" Street. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

Dec. 2 – OSHA Recordkeeping: Log 300 – 11:30am-1:30pm
Borate, Inc. will give a presentation on the changes that take place in recording and maintaining records at Marie Callender's Banquet Room, 350 S Mooney Blvd., Visalia. Tickets are $50. For information and reservations, call 799-2332.

Dec. 2 – Exeter Chamber Mixer – 5-6:30pm
The City of Exeter, Exeter Police Department and Hometown Emporium will host the Exeter Chamber at the Police Department, 100 N. C St. Networking and refreshments are featured.

Dec. 4 – Exeter's 23rd Annual Downtown Christmas Open House – 5-8pm
Downtown Exeter hosts an Old Fashion Christmas as you walk along the downtown streets. The old-fashioned fire truck rides, pictures with Santa and refreshments are featured. For information, call 592-2919.

Dec. 4-8 – Travel East
The Tulare Chamber of Commerce will host a trip to New York City, including round-trip airfare from Fresno. For information, call the chamber at 686-1547.

Dec. 4 – WCK Ultimate Conquest – 6pm
WCK Full Rules Muay Thai presents the Ultimate Conquest at Tachi Place Casino in Porterville. Tickets, $40-$100, available at tachipalace.com.

Dec. 5 – Tax Exemptions for the Agricultural Industry – 9:30am
Kings County Farm Bureau, Western United Dairymen and California Automotive Wholesalers Association will host Tax Exemptions for the Agricultural Industry at 680 N. Campus Dr., Hanford. For information, visit boe.ca.gov/ag.

Dec. 5 – Wine & Chocolate Tasting –

EVENT CALENDAR

6-9pm
This 14th annual event in Downtown Hanford kicks off the holiday shopping season with selected wines and chocolates, open houses, hors d'oeuvres throughout Main Street. For information, visit mainstreethanford.com.

Dec. 6 – Tinsel Toy 5K & 1 Mile Run Walk
The Visalia Runners and the Tulare Outlet Mall will host the third annual event to benefit the Salvation Army of Tulare's holiday toy drive. Register online at visaliarunners.org.

Dec. 6 – Spirit of the Holidays – 4-7pm
Exeter Kiwanis presents "An Old Fashioned Christmas" at the 23rd annual Spirit of the Holidays event at Exeter Veterans Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah Hwy. Wines, hors d'oeuvres, raffle, silent auction and Christmas tree auction are featured. Tickets $50. For information, call 592-2919.

Dec. 6 – 1st Saturday in Three Rivers – 9:30am-5pm
In celebration of the Raven Festival, first Saturday will feature special events focusing on the raven. For information, visit www.1stsaturdaytr.com.

Dec. 6 – Lemoore Christmas Parade – 6pm
A Frozen Valley Christmas is the theme for the Christmas parade in downtown Lemoore on D Street, between Follett and Hill. For information, contact the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce at 924-6401.

Dec. 11 – 18th Annual Charity Christmas Tree Auction
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce will raise funds for 12 local charities. Tickets are $50. For information, visit hanfordchamber.com.

Dec. 12 – Citrus Fruit Display and Tasting Event - 9am-12pm
The University of California Lindcove Research and Extension Center is hosting their annual Citrus Fruit Display and Tasting event featuring 100 varieties of citrus grown at Lindcove REC. There will also be a walking tour. For information, visit lrec.ucanr.edu.

Dec. 12 – Kings County Academic Decathlon Sponsorship Deadline
The deadline to submit sponsorship applications for the Kings County Office of Education Academic Decathlon is Dec. 12. Competition dates are Jan. 31 and Feb. 7. For information, call 589-7074.

Dec. 12 - 34th Annual Christmas Tree Auction – 8-11:30pm
Hosted by the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, the Christmas Tree Auction has become a local holiday tradition. Each year, more than 900 people dress in their finest clothes and kick off the holiday season with a giving spirit. Order tickets from your favorite participating charity or call the chamber at 734-5876.

Dec. 13 – Christmas at the Gallery – 4:30pm
The Exeter Courthouse Gallery of the Arts and Museum will hold an art auction, silent auction food, wines and entertainment. Tickets, $40, available by calling 679-2474.

Dec. 16 – 20th Annual London Christmas Parade – 4pm
Robert Isquierdo, Jr. will be the grand marshal and the Dinuba High Marching Band will perform.

Dec. 20 – Bride Expo Fresno – 11am-4pm
Shop and compare wedding professionals, including event designers, cake bakers, entertainers, invitations and romantic honeymoons. Runway fashion shows are presented at 11am and 2pm. The event will be at the Visalia Fox. For information, visit thegirlnetwork.com.

Dec. 21 – Posada – 1-8pm
The Lindsay Chamber of Commerce and The Spirit and the Bride Kingdom Coalition will present a Posada starting at Lindsay City Hall and followed by free coffee, hot chocolate and cookies at McDermont Field House. For information, call 333-1994.

Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve Celebration – 8pm-12am
Visalia's 210 Cafe will be transformed to host a New Year's Eve dinner featuring lobster or prime rib and entertainment. Tickets, $85, available at eventbrite.com.

Jan. 1 – Health Coverage Required
Beginning Jan. 1 all businesses with at least 100 full-time employees must provide health coverage to their employees. For information, visit HealthCare.gov.

Jan. 10 – Girl's Day Off Seminar – 11:30am-2pm
This is the first of four seminars to be held in 2015 by Women of the City at The Southern Pacific Depot in Visalia. Living without baggage will be discussed. Tickets, $75, are available on eventbrite.com.

Jan. 22 – The Great Wine Vs. Beer Showdown – 5:30pm
An evening of wine and beer tasting, appetizers and music will raise funds to support the Farm Bureau. The event will be held at the Hanford Civic Auditorium. Tickets, $50, available at brownpapertickets.com/event/925493.

Jan. 23 – Lemoore Chamber of Commerce Banquet
Lemoore's 2015 outstanding citizen, business and organization of the year will be named at their annual banquet. For information, visit lemoorechamberofcommerce.com.

Jan. 24 – 5th Annual Tule Fog 5K/10K Run – 7am
Visalia Parks and Recreation kicks off the New Year with the famous Tule Fog along St. John's River. More than 500 runners compete ever year. Male and female divisions. Participants who sign up by Jan. 15 are guaranteed a drift, long sleeved race shirt. Cost to enter is $25/$35 after Jan. 14. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Jan. 29 – Local Motion Awards Luncheon
The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) has rescheduled the Local Motion Awards Luncheon. Registration is $35, or $45 after Jan. 4. For information, visit tularecog.org.

March 7-8 – Tulare Sci-Fi Con
A pop-culture convention that welcomes all genres will be held at the International Agri-Center to benefit the Tulare Library Children's Section. Vendors, artists fan groups and others can download exhibitor applications at tularescificon.org. For information, visit facebook.com/tularescificon.

ART

Through November – Commemorating Italian Experiences in Tulare County – 12-4pm
The Tulare County Museum has launched a new exhibit in the History of Tulare County Farm Labor and Agriculture Museum. The museum is open Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am-4pm and Saturday and Sundays from 12-4pm. Admission is free. The Tulare County Museum is located in Mooney Grove Park in Visalia. For information, call 733-6616.

Through Nov. 21 – Trio of Sculptors
The work of three sculptors will be on display at the Porterville College Art Gallery through November 21. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 12-2 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. Contact the front desk for a free temporary parking permit.

Through Nov. 21 – We Will Live Forever
College of the Sequoias Art Gallery will be showing prints and drawings by Marty Azevedo. Gallery hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 11am-4pm and Thursday, 11am-7pm.

Through Nov. 28 – Farmas - New Works by Rogelio Gutierrez
The works of Valley native Rogelio Gutierrez will be on display at Arts Visalia. Admission is free. For information, visit artsvisalia.org.

Through Nov. 28 – Trazo Urbano: Contemporary Printmaking From Mexico in California – 12-5:30pm
A portfolio of prints created for the exhibition, Trazo Urbano will be on display at Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave. The gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday. For information, visit artsvisalia.org.

Through Nov. 30 – Hidden in the Leaves – 10am-6pm
Arts Alliance of Three Rivers will host its autumn exhibition at Sierra Subs & Salads Dining area. For information, visit facebook.com/artsallianceofthreerivers.

Through Dec. 28 – Elements at Exeter Art Gallery – 1-4pm
The works of acrylic artist Anees Akhund from Visalia, sculptor Christy Cole from Porterville, and photographers Hye Jung Kim and John C. Radar from Hawaii will be on display at the Exeter Art Gallery, 125 B Street. The gallery is open Saturdays and Sundays.

Through Dec. 31 – Double Take Exhibit
Jeri Burzin's exhibit of photography and mixed media will be at Michael's Custom Jewelry, 316 W. Main St., Visalia. For information, visit jeriburzin.com.

Through Dec. 31 – Visalia Visual Chronicle - 8am-5pm
Art from various artists that captures the culture of Visalia is on display at Provost and Pritchard, 130 N. Garden, Visalia. The gallery is open Monday-Friday. For information, call 636-1166.

Through Dec. 31 – Arts Consortium Membership Exhibition
The Arts Consortium is holding its first membership exhibition at the Visalia Convention Center. Nearly 40 works of art are included. For information, visit artsconsortium.org.

Through Jan. 3 – Paintings by Nadi Spencer
Acrylics and watercolors by Nadi Spencer of Three Rivers are on display at the Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare. The museum is open Thursday through Saturday. For information, visit tularehistoricalmuseum.org.

Through Jan. 18 – Celebration Exhibit
Main Gallery Artists Betty Berk, Toni Best, Jeri Burzin, Joy Collier, Elsah Cort, Laurie Gorman, Beckie Nava, Deborah Nolan, Lynn Ramires, Deanna Saldana and Ginny Wilson are featured at Café 225. The public is invited to the reception Sunday, Nov. 23, 2-5pm. For more information, visit www.maingalleryvisalia.com or call 967-8635.

Nov. 20 – Soup, Sip and Shop – 5-7pm
The Creative Center's Jon Ginsburg Gallery presents an evening of free samples of soups, breads and desserts while you shop the Jon Ginsburg Gallery's annual gift fair at 410 E. Race St. Admission is free.

Nov. 20 – Holiday Ornament Crafts – 5pm
An adult holiday ornament craft class will be offered at the Tulare Public Library. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Nov. 23 – Celebration Exhibit Art Reception – 2-5pm
Main Gallery artists who are showing their work at Cafe 225, 225 W. Main, will be honored at a reception. The show runs through Jan. 18. For information, visit artsconsortium.org.

Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving Bushel Basket Bouquet Class – 6:30-8pm
Ramblin Rose of Lemoore will offer a crafting class at 246 Heinlen St. Advance tickets are $50. For information, visit facebook.com/ramblinroselemoore.

Nov. 26 – Crafty Corner: Knit and Crochet Group – 10:30am-12pm
Learn and practice fiber arts on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at Visalia Branch Library. For information, call 713-2703.

Nov. 28 – Holiday Craft Fair – 10am-4pm
Hanford's Holiday Craft and Vendor Fair will be held in Hanford Civic Park, followed by the Hanford Christmas Parade. Booths are available. For information, visit hanfordchamber.com.

Nov. 28 & 29 – Perfect Gift Boutique – 10am-4pm
Kaweah Artisans will present weaving, wood turning, gourds, pottery, jewelry, paintings, natural skin care and other gifts at the Art Center on North Fork Drive in Three Rivers. Admission and parking are free.

Nov. 29 – Annual Members' Winter Show Reception – 5:30-7:30pm
A reception for the Kings Art Center Annual Members' Winter Show Exhibit will be held. The exhibit will run from Nov. 30 through Jan. 3. For information, visit kingsartcenter.org.

Nov. 29-30 – 21st Annual Young Master's Exhibit
The Kings Art Center will feature art by K-12 students from Kings County schools in the Banister Studio Gallery at 605 N Douty St., Hanford. For information, visit kingsartcenter.org.

COMMUNITY

Through Dec. 20 – Food For Fines
Tulare Public Library will forgive fines for donated non-perishable food and jackets. All items will be given to Tulare Emergency Aid Council. For information, call 685-4502.

Nov. 21 – Couponing – 3-5pm
The Visalia Branch Library will offer classes on Stretching the Food Dollar every other Friday in the Blue Room. Registration is not required.

Nov. 21 & 26 – Stuff the Trolley
The Visalia Towne Trolley will visit three locations to gather donated food for Foodlink's holiday food basket program. On Nov. 21, the trolley will stop at Cottonwood Creek School at 7:45am, and at Royal Oaks School at 10am. On Nov. 26, the trolley will stop at Keller Williams on Main Street. For information, call 651-3363.

Nov. 21 & 28 – Reiki – 1-3pm
Livia Thompson, a reiki usui/holy fire master level practitioner of reiki, is teaching the Japanese technique for stress reduction every Friday at Cosmic Corral, 209 N. Irwin St., Hanford. For information, call 772-8140.

Nov. 21 & 28 – Celebrate Recovery – 6-9:30pm
The recovery program, originating from Rick Warren's church, will be offered at Visalia Community Church of Christ. For information, visit vccoc.org.

Nov. 22 – Grocery Outlet-Visalia Blood Drive – 10am-3pm
All donors will receive a coupon for a free turkey with a purchase of $15 or more in groceries. The Grocery Outlet is located at 2323 S. Mooney Blvd.

Nov 23 – Turkey Shoot – 10am-4pm
The Tulare Host Lions Club's Annual Turkey Shoot will be held at the Agri-Center in Tulare. Shooting at a target is $3 per round. Prizes include frozen turkeys. Proceeds go to the vision conservation for Tulare elementary schools and the Blind Babies Foundation of Tulare. For information, call 688-2740 or 686-6483.

Nov. 25 – NaNoWriMo Write In – 12-3pm
Visalia Branch Library will hold a write-in to participate in the NaNoWriMo.org campaign, a part of National Novel Writing Month. For information, call 731-2723.

Nov. 26 – Medicare Extra Help – 1-4pm
Every Wednesday, Tulare Senior Center offers free counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Help with prescription plans, claims, appeals and general information. This program is sponsored by Kings/Tulare AAA HICAP. Appointments available by calling 623-0199.

Nov. 26 – Cutler/Orosi Community Blood Drive – 4-7pm
A blood drive will be held at Pizza Planet, 12825 Ave. 413 in Orosi. Donors receive special rewards and discount coupons.

Nov. 26 – The Knitting Club – 5:30pm
The Tulare Public Library knitting club meets every other Wednesday in the Olympic Room.

Nov. 29 – Anime Visalia – 9:30am
Anime Visalia will meet at the Visalia Branch Library. For information, call 280-7862.

Nov. 29-30 – Lemoore Christmas Craft Show – 10am-4pm
A boutique and craft show will be held at Lemoore Veteran's Memorial Building.

Nov. 29 – Sci/Fi Book Club – 1pm
Tulare Public Library Sci/Fi Book Club meets on the last Saturday each month. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Dec. 1 – Three Rivers Woman's Club – 1-3pm
Every month on the first Monday, the Three River's Woman's Club meets at the Memorial Building. For information, visit threerivers.com.

Dec. 2 – Giving Tuesday
Hands in the Community will hold a fundraiser to lease its office and complete other projects. The organization provides services for those who are less fortunate. To donate, visit hnconline.org/custom.htm.

Dec. 2 – Exeter Friends of the Library Books Sale
The Friends of the Library will hold its book sale at Exeter Library, 230 E. Chestnut. For information, visit exeterfriends.weebly.com.

Dec. 2 – Cancer Caregiver Support Group – 1:30-3pm
This Kaweah Delta Cancer Caregiver Support group meets at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Ave, on the first Tuesday of every month. For information, call 624-3225.

Dec. 2 – First Tuesday Book Club – 6:30-7:45pm
The first Tuesday Book Club meets at the Visalia Branch Library Blue Room For information, visit 713-2707.

Dec. 2 – Light Up a Life – 7-9pm
Light Up A Life with Kaweah Delta Hospice at the Visalia Holiday Inn, 9000 W. Airport Drive. Honor a loved one who passed in the last year by placing special ornaments on the hospice tree. Purchase an ornament for $25 and it will be returned after the holiday season. For information, visit kaweahdelta.org.

Dec. 3 – COS Blood Drive – 10am-2pm
The College of the Sequoias will have a blood drive on its Visalia campus. Donors receive special rewards coupons

Dec. 3 – Kaweah Delta Holiday Cheer – 5-8pm
Hot chocolate, cookies, music from local schools and Santa Claus will be part of the program in front of Kaweah Delta Medical Center, 400 W. Mineral King Ave., Visalia. For information, visit kaweahdelta.org.

Dec. 4 – First Presbyterian Church of Hanford Blood Drive – 4-7pm
The First Presbyterian Church of Hanford will have a blood drive at 340 N. Irwin. Special rewards coupons are given to donors.

Dec. 4 – Cancer is Dinner Talk – 5:30pm
On the first Thursday of each month, Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosts this support group at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Ave. For information, visit Kaweahdelta.org.

Dec. 4 & 18 – Oakland Raiders Boosters Meeting – 7pm
Tulare Kings Counties Oakland Raiders Boosters meet on the second and fourth Thursdays each month at Elks Lodge, 3100 W. Main St., Visalia.

Dec. 4 – Visalia Diabetes Support Group – 5:30-7pm
The Kaweah Delta Health Care District support group meets on the first Thursday of each month at Kaweah Delta Multiservice Center, 402 W. Acequia. For information, visit Kaweahdelta.org.

Dec. 5 & 6 – Christmas Yard Sale – 8am-2pm
The Visalia Gleaning Seniors is having its Annual Christmas Yard Sale at 2818 S. West St. (corner of West and Whitendale). Last minute gifts, decorations and other Christmas items will be available.

Dec. 5 – First Friday with a Physician – 12–1:30pm
On the first Friday of each month, Adventist Medical Center in Hanford hosts a physician seminar series. For information, call 589-2032.

Dec. 6 – 1st Saturday Books Sale – 10am-2pm
Friends of the Tulare Public Library hold a book sale on the first Saturday of each month. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Dec. 6 – Visalia's 10th Annual Holiday Home Tour – 12-5pm
Redwood High School Marching Band and Color Guard will present a home tour, featuring decorations, music, desserts and prizes. A Sleigh Full of Memories will begin at Quail Park, corner of Linwood & Cypress in Visalia. Tickets are $15 in advance or $20 on day of the event. For information, visit redwoodrangerband.org.

Dec. 6 – NaNoWriMo Wrap Up Party – 2-4:30pm
The Visalia Branch of the Tulare County Library is serving as a Come Write In space for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), offering its meeting room and light refreshments in November. A Thank God It's Over (TGIO) wrap up party will be held in the Visalia Branch Blue Room. For information, please go to nanowrimo.org and tularecountylibrary.org, or call 713-2703.

Dec. 7 – Light Up A Light – 7pm
A memorial celebration hosted by Adventist Health Services will be held at The Old Court House, 113 Court St. For information, call 537-2860.

Dec. 8 – Mental Health First Aid – 8am-5pm
An 8-hour course that helps the public identify, understand and respond to the signs of mental illnesses will be taught at Cafe 210 in Visalia. Upon completion, participants will be Mental Health First Aid Certificated. The event is sold out. For information about future events, visit mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Dec. 9 – Yappy Hour – 5-9pm
Happy Hour is on the second Tuesday at The Planning Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 514 E. Main Street. A donation from all proceeds benefit the Valley Oak SPCA. Well-behaved, leashed pets are welcome on the patio.

Dec. 9 – Exeter Friends of the Library – 7pm
The Exeter Friends of the Library meets on the second Tuesday each month at the Exeter Branch Library, 230 E. Chestnut. For information, visit exeterfriends.weebly.com.

Dec. 11 – Woman's Club Christmas Home Tour – 4:30-8pm
Exeter Woman's Club hosts tours of local homes with holiday decorations, live music, hot cocoa and snacks. Tickets, $15 in advance or $20 on the day of the tour, are available at Exeter Chamber. For information, call 592-6738. To view previous year's homes visit exeterwomansclub.com.

Dec. 11 – Tree of Remembrance Service – 6:15pm
People's Funeral Chapel will commemorate lost loved ones at a special service featuring a brief message and a remembrance video. To make reservations or to have your loved one remembered, submit a photograph to angelica.Vargas@dignitymemorial.com or at the chapel, 501 N. Douty St., Hanford.

Dec. 12 – Sweets For Seniors – 8am
Jamison High School, American Legion Post 100 and the Lemoore Recreation Department will host a free event for seniors at the Civic Auditorium, 435 C. Street. A free gift for all seniors, desserts prepared by West Hills College, Christmas music and skits performed by Jamison High School Students will be featured. For reservations, call 924-6767.

Dec. 12-13 – The Road to Christmas
A Christmas festival with live music, food, interactive activities will begin at The Road Church, 1021 S. Burke St., Visalia at 6:15pm and on Dec. 13 at 4pm. Adult tickets are $10 and children $5 dollars and are available at the Road Church and at theroadvisalia.com.

THEATER

Through Nov. 23 – Christmas Belles – 7:30pm
The Barn Theater in Porterville presents "Christmas Belles," a farce about squabbly sisters, family secrets, a surly Santa, a reluctant Elvis impersonator and a church Christmas program that spins hilariously out of control. On Fridays and Saturdays the show is at 7:30pm, and Sundays at 2:15pm at Plano Street and Olive Avenue. For information, call 310-7046.

Through Nov. 30 – Side By Side By Sondheim
Visalia Players Theater Company presents this tribute to composer-lyricist Stephen Sondheim at the Ice House Theater, 410 E Race Ave., Visalia. Matinees will be held at 2pm Nov. 23 & 30. Evening performances will be held Nov. 21, 22, 28 & 29 at 7:30pm. For tickets and information, visit visaliaplayers.org.

Nov. 20-22 – Phantom of the Opera – 7pm
The Tulare County Office of Education's Theatre Company presents this classic production at L.J. Williams Theater, 1001 Main St. A Saturday matinee will be held at 1pm. Tickets are available at TCOE offices, 2637 W. Burrel and 7000 Doe, Visalia.

Nov. 20-22 – Company at COS – 7:30pm
College of the Sequoias presents "Company," Stephen Sondheim's musical about a bachelor being pressured into marriage, at the COS Theatre, 915 S. Mooney, Visalia. The show won six Tonys on Broadway. Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows at 7:30pm. Saturday matinees at 2pm. Info: 730-3907 or www.costheatre.org/tickets.

Nov 21-23, 30 & Dec. 6-7 – Kings Players - A Redneck Christmas Carol
The Kings Players present "A Redneck Christmas Carol" at the Temple Theater, 514 Visalia St., Hanford.

Nov. 21 – Comedy Blast with Bruce Jingles – 9-11pm
Salvi Entertainment will present Bruce Jingles and special guests at Lamp Liter Inn, 3300 W. Mineral King. Tickets available at brownpapertickets.com.

Nov. 22 – Comedy Slam – 8pm
Lindsay Chamber of Commerce presents a comedy show and dance party at McDermont Field House. Tickets for the 21+ show are $15 at the door. For pre-sale tickets, $10, call 562-4929.

Nov. 26 – A Christmas Story – 2pm
The Tulare Public Library will feature a free showing of the movie "A Christmas Story." For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Nov. 28-29 – 'Twas the Night Before Christmas
Dance Arts will present "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" at El Diamante High School Theater, 5100 W. Whitendale Ave. at 7pm on Nov. 28 and 29 and at 2pm on Nov. 29. Tickets are $15 and available by calling 733-9414.

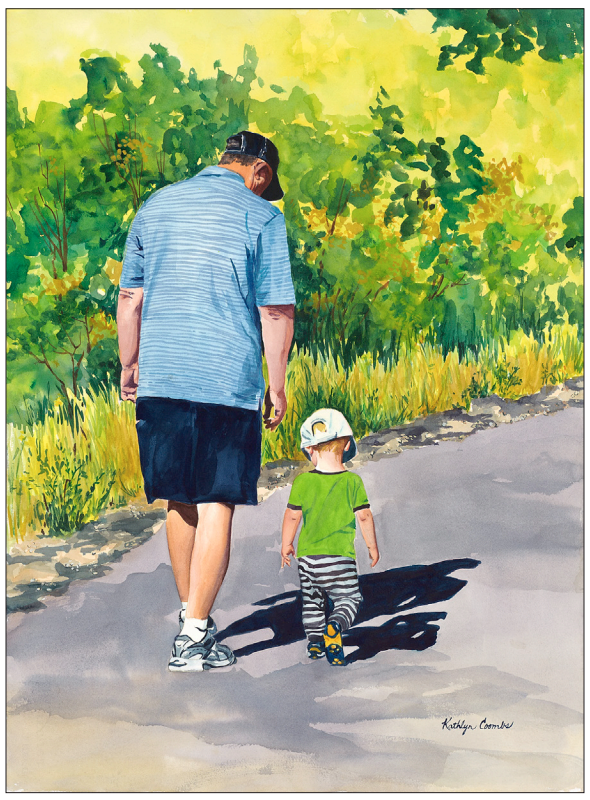
Dec. 4-14 – Pedro, the Angel of Olivera Street
The Enchanted Playhouse presents the story of Pedro, a young boy with the voice of an angel who wishes to restore traditional Christmas celebrations. The play will be held on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. Tickets are $8 and $5 for matinees. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

Dec. 13 – Jingle Ball – 7:30pm
The Lindsay Community Theater, 190 N. Elmwood Ave., presents Jingle Ball, a holiday variety show with local talent, at 7:30pm. For information, call 562-1659 or visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com

Kings Art Center Exhibits to Showcase 150 County Artists

The Kings Art Center in Hanford will have two exhibits opening over the November 29-30 weekend. The annual Winter Show in the Marcellus Gallery will present new work by Art League members and feature the watercolors of Kathy Montgomery Coombs. The Banister Studio Gallery will showcase the 21st annual Young Masters' Exhibit, featuring art by K-12 students from Kings County schools.

These two exhibits, favorites in the community, will present work by approximately 150 artists of all ages, and serve as a reminder of the creative talent found in the county.



"Let Me Tell You" by Kathy Coombs.

The 2014 Winter Show includes a broad range of media, including drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, glass and ceramics, and watercolors.

As the daughter of the late Paula Montgomery, a local artist, art educator and founding member of the Kings Art Center, it was perhaps preordained that Hanford native Kathy Montgomery Coombs would discover and pursue art not only as a career but as a passion. After completing college, Coombs taught art in Kings County schools. Since retiring in 2005, she has returned to the classroom as a student.

"A goal I set when retiring was to get back to art by taking classes," said Coombs. "I was able to study under Fresno watercolorist Carlene Kostiw, and I continue to work with her."

Coombs is a realist; her subjects are immediately recognizable. Her color is vivid and translucent and the resulting work is suffused with light.

Family, friends and the California coast are where Coombs finds her inspiration. When painting family and friends, her intention is to capture their personalities while recreating precious time spent with them. Time spent on the central California coast has provided her with a deep connection with the ocean, and this connection has served as the inspiration for some of her most successful paintings. "I never tire of walking along the beach as it always provides me with a variety of subjects from seaweed to sea otters," she said. "Each walk provides a fresh perspective."

Coombs attended Cal State University Long Beach, receiving a bachelor's degree in elementary art education. After college, she taught art at the elementary and junior high school level in Kings County and continues to occasionally teach art in Paso Robles. A highlight of her teaching career was being named "California's Elementary Art Educator of the Year" by the California Art Education Association.

"The Lonely One" by Kathy Coombs.

Besides the Kings Art Center, her work has also been exhibited at a Paso Robles winery and at the 2012 Shell Beach Art Stroll. She was most recently awarded first place and Best of Show for "Under the Pier," a painting exhibited in the 2014 Kings Art Center's Spring Show.

"Sitting in the Sunshine" by Kathy Coombs.

Currently living in Hanford with her husband, Bill, Coombs makes frequent trips to the central coast and to visit grandchildren in Chicago. She is an active supporter of the Art Center through her work with the Kings Art Center Guild.

Young Masters' Exhibit

This annual exhibit, co-sponsored by the Kings Art Center and the Kings County Office of Education, features over 150 drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures, and ceramics by K-12 students in Kings County schools. This is a major event at the Art Center and the only countywide exhibit with entries coming from all county communities.

Through the efforts of the Art Center staff and exhibition coordinator Bill Hatcher, all schools in Kings County were visited and invited to participate in this exhibit. Once the work arrived at the center, Hatcher, Tedra Battaglia, and other volunteers installed the work in the Banister Studio Gallery. Ashley DeGree, office manager, prepared the labels and organized the awards program.

All exhibiting students, along with parents, family, friends and the general public, are encouraged to attend and support these talented young students as they receive recognition for their creative achievements.

The opening and awards program for Meet the Masters will be held on Sunday November 30, from 12:30-2:30pm at the Kings Art Center.

Tulare Host Lions Annual Turkey Shoot

The Tulare Host Lions Club's annual Turkey Shoot will be held on Sunday, November 23, on the grounds of the Agri-Center in Tulare.

Frozen 12 to 15 pound turkeys will be on site. They can be won by target shooting at $3 a round, or taking part in the other games. The shoot starts at 10am and runs until 4pm. All net proceeds go to vision conservation for the Tulare elementary schools and the Blind Babies Foundation of Tulare County.

For more information, call 688-2740 or 686-6483.

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Giving Tree

33RD ANNUAL

CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION

FRIDAY, DEC 6, 2013

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VIP: 5:30 | GENERAL: 7:30

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Each home will host a small musical ensemble group from the Redwood High School Band.

10th Annual Holiday Home Tour to be Held Saturday, December 6

The 10th Annual Holiday Home Tour, featuring decorations, music, desserts and prizes, will be held on Saturday, December 6 from noon to 5pm. The theme of this year's event is "A Sleigh Full of Memories," and is presented by the Redwood High School Marching Band and Color Guard.

The tour will include several prominent Visalia homes specially decorated for the Christmas/Hanukkah season. Each home will host a small musical ensemble group from the Redwood High School band, which will play holiday favorites. Each home will also feature holiday decorations and spreads of colorful and delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts.

The tour begins at Quail Park Retirement Village, 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia (just West of Linwood St.). Ticket cost is $15 before December 6, and $20 at the door. After purchasing tickets, guests will receive a map with directions to the homes on the tour. Quail Park itself will be decorated, and several local businesses will have booths set up featuring many holiday specials.

Guests will also have the opportunity to purchase tickets for "Tricky Tray" prizes —specially decorated baskets with various gift items, and even tickets to events such as whale watching and a ballet show in San Francisco. Once guests have experienced all that Quail Park has to offer, they may visit any or all of the homes on the tour.

Tickets may be purchased from Redwood High School Band and Color Guard members; the Redwood High School finance office; White's Music (corner of Caldwell Ave. and Court St.); Copy Pack 'N Ship (4125 W. Noble – old Vons Shopping Center); MidTown Sports (117 E. Main St.) or Diva Chic Boutique (202 E. Acequia Ave.). Tickets for the tour may also be purchased at www.redwoodrangerband.org.

Santa Claus Hired for Return Appearances at Sequoia Mall

Vincent Juarez

Vincent Juarez, who owns a party shop business in the Sequoia Mall, has announced that he will bring Santa Claus to the mall for the fourth straight year. In addition to Santa, Juarez will also hire a photographer, photo printer and elf.

"Last year, the community was very happy about it," said Juarez. "They like the shorter lines and more parking, and the photo prices were more affordable. Also the kids have more time with Santa and the layout looks amazing.

"It's grown every year," he continued. "The first year was real tough because they didn't have Santa here for six or seven years."

Other Sequoia Mall businesses have become sponsors, including Serrano's Furniture, Sears, Don Roberto Jewelers, Eyebrow Shaping by Asia and Los Perez Mexican Restaurant.

"I get good feedback from the customers who come in," said Gracie Delgado, Don Roberto Jewelers store manager.

"It brings more people in," said Eddie Aguirre, owner of Visalia's MMA Gear. "It's another way to get people to come in and see the stores that have come into the mall."

"I just want to try to help the mall," explained Juarez, who added that Santa's time there isn't just to bring in more holiday shoppers. "Lately, we've been having a lot of entrepreneurs here, people looking for opportunities to create a business."

Santa Claus will make his first appearance at the Sequoia Mall on Black Friday, and will be there 11am to 8pm every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until Christmas Eve.